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[ON THE BALCONY AT RICHMOND.]

MY LADY'S LOVERS.

A NEW NOVEL.

BY AN EMINENT AUTHOR.

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER THE SEASON.

Minds will change
And circumstance, occasion's common drudge,
Assail the strongest of us.

THE season waned, and Lord and Lady Ardinlaun were in a very unhappy frame of mind. They had taken a house in town, at an expense they could never think of without wincing, for one object alone, and that object had failed. Lady Pearl was not provided with a husband.

"I don't understand it," said Lord Ardinlaun. "The men swarm about her like bees round a honey-pot, and yet nothing has come of it."

"Which is Pearl's fault," her ladyship tartly remarked.

"She does not want to marry—eh?"

"I don't say that, but she is an obstinate girl, and I hate obstinacy. She has made up her mind for one who can't or won't speak, and the rest she keeps at bay."

And Lady Ardinlaun, sitting as upright as a dart in her chair, shook her head angrily, while his lordship, with his hands behind him and back slightly bent, paced slowly up and down the room.

"Then again," continued Lady Ardinlaun,

"she has shown such eccentric taste with regard to that Mr. Dray, encouraging him so that he is always at her heels like a puppy dog."

"Perhaps he is the man," his lordship suggested. "He is dreadfully in love with her—that is plain."

"Out upon you," returned his strong-minded spouse. "Pearl would never marry such a man as that."

"I don't know," said Lord Ardinlaun, reflectively; "women are strange beings. There is no accounting for what they may say or do, or to whom they may give their hearts. I'm inclined to think that Dray is the man."

"And I am inclined to shake you for your stupidity," Lady Ardinlaun replied; "it has folly on the face of it. But it is odd that she should prefer him to all the goodly men around her."

Although it was a puzzling matter to them, there was no great secret in it after all. Tommy Dray fell in love with Lady Pearl, and after sighing at a distance for the better part of the season was favoured with an opportunity to sit by her side.

Not being gifted with remarkable conversational powers, and unlearned in the arts and sciences, he could only talk about the people he knew, and among others he spoke of Hugh Egerton with the warmest admiration.

Now Hugh had not appeared in society for some time, and Lady Pearl wondered what had become of him. Here was an opportunity to satisfy her curiosity which was not to be despised, and she proceeded to cull the honey of information from that unconscious flower, Tommy Dray.

"You and this Mr. Egerton are great friends?" she said.

"I am happy to say we are," replied Tommy, "and I wish he were a happier man."

"He used to have a sad look," said Lady Pearl.

"By George!" exclaimed Tommy, "he has it now."

"Indeed!" said Lady Pearl. "I thought he had left town."

"Not a bit of it," said Tommy; "but I don't suppose he would like me to speak of it—"

"Then pray do not. Mr. Egerton and I are almost strangers."

"But I am sure he would not mind my speaking to you, Lady Pearl. He is one of your greatest admirers, I can see, although he says very little to me."

Pearl put up her fan for a moment, and the subject was apparently dismissed. Tommy was wandering away when she skilfully brought him back again.

"Who is that near the door?" she said. "He bears some resemblance to Mr. Egerton."

The individual referred to bore a much closer resemblance to Tommy than he did to Hugh, and Lady Pearl was gently reproved for having a bad memory.

"You cannot remember Egerton at all," he said, "if you think he bears any resemblance to that fellow. Besides, you won't see Egerton again this season."

"Indeed!"

"No; he's mixed up in a way—with people and something I don't quite understand—and of course you don't feel any interest in it—"

"Is it romantic?"

"Well, rather," Tommy replied, "for there is

a gipsy woman in it, who marches into his place and orders him about and takes him away when she pleases—

"Will you excuse me?" said Pearl, rising. "I have forgotten something I ought to have said to Lady Ardinlaun, and I had better tell her now for fear I should forget it again."

"Not a bit interested in my chatter," muttered Tommy. "I wish I could talk like some fellows, but at my best I am but a blundering booby. That something to tell Lady Ardinlaun was all bosh. She wanted to get rid of me."

He was in a very dejected frame of mind, being hopelessly and desperately in love. If Pearl had asked him to put himself under the wheels of her carriage he would have done it if there had been a chance of not being killed outright.

Tommy had some romance in him, although he did not suspect it, and of late had often pictured himself as being maimed or injured in some way for Lady Pearl, and living to be thanked daily by glances from her wondrous eyes.

The next time they met he had, to his unqualified delight, a gracious reception, and from that time he became the faithful, people-like follower of the beauty of the season, to the dire wrath and confusion of many more eligible lovers.

Tommy accepted the position complacently, and treated many men whom he had hitherto looked upon as his superiors with tolerably lofty scorn and scarce-concealed contempt. He also began to wonder if there could be anything in this encouragement, and to indulge himself with long, private inspections of his form in the glass.

But Tommy was not a conceited ape, and he did not fall into the error of thinking that Pearl was in love with him. He hoped it might come in time, that she would respect him, at least, and if it could be brought about— But as Tommy thought of proposing to her his knees gave out signs of weakness, and he put it aside as a feat to be performed at some distant time.

Meanwhile, he was much in her society, and was amazed to find how often he talked of Hugh Egerton. Begin with what subject he might, the tide of talk carried him to Hugh, and on him he lay stranded, floundering about with all sorts of semi-revelations about his friend, until Pearl dismissed him.

It was very odd, and in thinking it over he arrived at the conclusion that he had "Hugh Egerton on the brain."

But the information he gave to Lady Pearl was welcome, though it brought her many sad moments. She did not like what she heard. The evident poverty of Hugh distressed her, and the mysterious association with that gipsy woman, whom Tommy eloquently described as "a female bristling with combustibles," raised in her heart a feeling which was akin to jealousy.

This made her angry with herself, but be as angry as she might she could not hide the truth. Hugh Egerton was of more interest to her than any living man.

It was a habit of hers to ride early in the morning in the Row, generally attended by the groom alone, for Lord Ardinlaun was a constant visitor to the Strangers' Gallery in Parliament, which compelled him to give up his early rising, and Lady Ardinlaun no longer patronised the saddle.

During one of these early rides—it was quite at the end of the season—she came across Hugh Egerton.

The Row was almost deserted—not half a dozen equestrians were in sight, and Hugh represented the only pedestrian of his class. He was leaning, by mere force of habit it seemed, upon the iron rail that divided the ride from the footpath, and looking vacantly before him like a man whose mind is far away.

He did not hear her approach, and would have probably allowed her to go by unrecognised, but for her horse, which directly in front of him became restless and curvetted about until he looked up and raised his hat.

The groom came riding forward, but Pearl signified with a motion of her hand that he was

not wanted, and he fell back. Pearl's horse became immediately tractable and stood still.

"You are wise, Mr. Egerton," said Pearl. "The park is never so beautiful as at this hour."

"It is late for me," he replied, with a gentle smile. "Latterly I have taken to coming here at dawn."

"Reversing the ways of the world."

"I do it, Lady Pearl, because my days are fully occupied."

"You must be very studious."

"I fear not," he said, with another smile. "My time is not all devoted to study. I walk a great deal to and fro—"

"Studying the beauties of the suburbs of London."

"No, Lady Pearl; my journeys unhappily are always in one direction. But this is very uninteresting stuff to you. When do you leave town?"

"In a week or so."

"May I call once before I go? I fear that I have been guilty of great rudeness in neglecting all my friends."

"We have not thought so," said Lady Pearl, quietly.

"Perhaps," he said, "you have not thought of me at all?"

Their eyes met as he said this, and an answer rose to the tongue of Lady Pearl, but it was never spoken. Her eyes unconsciously approached him for despatching himself forgotten, and a wild palpitation of the heart checked his further speech. So they stood somewhat awkwardly for nearly a minute without a word passing between them.

The time but not the place was favourable to such a meeting, and with other surroundings there is no knowing what might not have passed between them now that the ice of reserve was broken.

The horse had drawn near the rails, so that Hugh could touch it, and he laid his hand upon its noble, arched neck, patting it gently until he found words to speak.

"I cannot but rejoice," he said, in a low tone, "to find that I am not quite forgotten, and yes I have no right to be remembered by anyone, least of all by you."

"Are you sure that you do not do yourself an injustice?" she asked.

"No," he replied. "I only speak honestly. There are few men who have more to contend with than I have, or who have a more hopeless look-out in the future, or who are more utterly alone. I know not why I confide in you, for really the petty troubles of my poor life can be of no interest to—"

"You do yourself an injustice first," said Lady Pearl, "and now you do one to me."

Again they looked at each other for one brief moment, and the warm blood flushed their faces. With him it passed on and left him deadly pale. He held out his hand.

"Your horse is growing restive, Lady Pearl," he said; "good bye."

Her small hand rested a moment in his, receiving a gentle pressure, and then he left her, disappeared through the Knightsbridge gate, which was just behind him.

His going was abrupt, but Pearl was not offended, and rode on with a face lighted with a light that have never rested there before.

"He loves me," her heart whispered.

Hope runs by the side of love, and Pearl put aside all thought of the mystery attached to Hugh. It could be nothing to disturb her, and in time would be explained.

It was strange that she should think of him thus already with no word spoken, but looks are love's best words, and for good or ill they had given their hearts to each other. She scarcely missed him now, for he was present with her in the spirit, and was he not coming to see her again ere he went away?

In the afternoon she went out with the duke, her brother, on his drag, filled with a brilliant party, and she was the gayest woman there. Among the gentlemen were Tommy Dray, Lord Raidenstore, and Sir Charles Friarly, the latter clad in mourning, with a look of sobered sorrow

on his face. He succeeded in getting the seat immediately behind Pearl, and Lord Raidenstore was next to him. Tommy Dray, unfortunately for his peace of mind, was driven to a back seat, where an old dowager with young ideas flirted with him until he was on the borders of insanity.

It was bad enough to be shut out of the society of one he loved without being bothered to death by the mincing and murmuring of a woman old enough to be his mother. Tommy began to think that life must indeed be nothing but vanity.

All that afternoon two men were watching each other closely and keenly without any outward signs of it. These were Lord Raidenstore and Sir Charles Friarly; each was beginning to read the other, and a rivalry was fully established between them.

It was but two months since the news of the death of Lady Friarly was brought to town, and the baronet's bereavement was too recent for him to propose to another wife, but he could by the train and prepare the way so that he could score a victory in the future if he could only keep rivals from the field.

Had Sir Charles known as much as the reader he might have spared his diplomatic energies that afternoon, employed to keep Lord Raidenstore from advancing a step towards the end he sought.

It was well done and it irritated his lordship, but in reality it was thrown away.

Lord Raidenstore, once so hopeful, was beginning to lose heart. Seek it as he might he could not get his opportunity to press his suit with Pearl. By accident or design something or somebody was ever in the way; in other respects he had nothing to disturb him.

Emilie de Lamoignon had thrown up her engagement and disappeared. There was a rumor about her having crossed the sea to carry America by storm, and he would not have been sorry to hear that she was a hundred fathoms down under the blue waters. A woman who could speak and look as she did when they parted that night was dangerous.

She was best out of the way, and he had congratulated himself heartily upon her going and his giving his whole energies to carry the heart of Lady Pearl.

He brought the battery of his eyes to bear and used his tongue to the best advantage, considering the opportunities that were afforded him, and he had not advanced one step towards victory.

He looked around him for a rival and could see none until that day, when he saw Sir Charles Friarly's warm glances at Pearl, and read a set purpose beneath the mock sadness of a quiet face and sombre garb.

The duke drove to Richmond, where a dinner was prepared for the party at the Star and Garter; a telegram an hour before sufficed to have a spread sufficient to satisfy the most fastidious gourmand.

It was laid out in one of the private rooms commanding a view of that magnificent panorama of the Thames and beautiful Surrey, which people who go a thousand miles for scenery would find difficult to beat for real beauty. Mightier hills and a wilder landscape may be found in a hundred places, but for real charm and rich scenery the view from Richmond Hill is not to be easily matched.

A good dinner and entertaining society are things calculated to raise the spirits, and there were much laughter and many sparkling eyes at the table. Tommy Dray was still snarled out from Lady Pearl, the presuming Sir Charles and Lord Raidenstore having secured seats each side of her, but he made himself happy with wine and quietly drank to the confusion of his enemies and his own happiness, which was not marred by the flirting dowager, who, finding him eye and tongue proof, had deserted him for the duke, who good-naturedly tolerated her ancient tricks and faded allurements.

Who would think of the cost of a dinner then? Certainly not the duke, who rarely thought of the cost of anything at all. He was spending money fast, and it was well known

that the horde of money-lenders had a rich prospective harvest before them, but for all that the Denvilles was not yet in danger.

There were two other handsome girls at the table besides Pearl—daughters of Colonel Dashwood, a retired Indian officer, a bon vivant and a good fellow, but with a limited purse. His wife had been dead a dozen years or so, and he had chaperoned his girls wherever they went.

Lucy and Meg were both vivacious, with a profusion of blonde hair and supple figures that would have been a temptation to that mythical old humpback good St. Anthony. But for their lack of money they would have married a couple of seasons before.

Lucy, the elder, sat next to Tommy Dray, and when that good-natured gentleman was filled with rich wine she began to poke a little fun at him, and ere long Tommy found himself taking round shots of wit and retorting the fire with his little pea-shooting tongue with the utmost complacency.

A man with that mocker within him which we call wine invariably becomes convinced of his wisdom at the same time, and Tommy was not so astounded as he ought to have been at the flashes of wit he indulged in to the great merriment of his pretty companion.

He, like wine in his wisdom, established himself as a connoisseur of female beauty, and his eye roamed over the pretty face, the round, white neck, and the supple figure of Lucy, his critical air presently becoming merged in one of unqualified admiration.

Meg, sitting on the opposite side next to the colonel, marked what was going on, and bestowed approving glances upon her sister, and screwing up her lips so that the quick eyes of Lucy read from them: "No end of thousands a year."

The colonel also approved, and drank his wine like a father who had laboured well for his children and saw success looming in the distance.

They lingered over the dinner until the twilight came, and then broke up to have coffee on the balcony. Lucy Dashwood lingered behind to look for her shawl, and Tommy, with eyesight not so good as it usually was, owing to the perverse way the wine had got into his head, stayed behind to help her.

In settling down upon the balcony Lord Raidenstore executed a manoeuvre that put Sir Charles Friarly temporarily out of the field. He put Lady Pearl into a corner seat, took the next one himself, and secured the duke and Colonel Dashwood as his next companions. The duke and the colonel diving into sporting matters, Lord Raidenstore had Pearl to himself.

A more glorious eve never settled upon this isle of ours. The sun had gone down, but he had left a bright, rich, grey sky behind him and a glowing twilight upon the earth.

Far away the hills lay in shade, and just below the winding river wound its sparkling way, dotted with pleasure boats and here and there a barge going on its ponderous way, but picturesque withal.

Soft sounds of distant laughter rose up from the stream, and even the hoarse cry of the barge-man as he shouted to the man towing on horse-back was made musical by distance, and the muffled clink of the oar was as soft as the pattering of the unshod foot of a child.

"You admire this scene, Lady Pearl," said Lord Raidenstore, after watching her eyes dreamily fixed upon the valley.

"It is very beautiful," she replied, "and I have never been here before."

"I have," he said, "many times, but it has never appeared to me so beautiful as it is to-night. Association has so much to do with our appreciation of a landscape."

"You have pleasant associations of Richmond,"

"To-night I have, and trust to keep them."

He bent towards her, speaking low, so that his words reached her ears alone. She either could not or would not understand, and the dreamy look was in her eyes again.

The twilight deepened, the boats one by one disappeared, and the barges were lost in the gloom. Below on the towing path there was one

solitary figure, that of a man moving slowly away from the town like one who has no object and scarce knows or cares whither he is going.

This figure soon attracted Lady Pearl's attention, and in turn that of Lord Raidenstore. Both watched him as he sauntered on, stopping here and there to look at the water. Far away as he was they could see that his attitude was one of listless dejection.

"I have seen a fellow like that before," said Lord Raidenstore, suddenly.

"Is it possible that you recognise him from here?" said Pearl.

"No," he returned, "but it is the air and walk of the man. I was at Oxford, and I met him one evening at the river side. He was an Oriel man and had been chiefly remarkable for his deep dejection—never joining in any of the usual fun of the 'varsity or making friends with anyone. He was walking that night just like that fellow over there, now on a little, now stopping a little to look at the river. I thought it odd, but troubled nothing more, and went home. In the morning he was missing."

He was speaking carelessly, as one telling a story of no particular importance, but Pearl's face was quickened with the light of interest, and as he paused she murmured:

"Missing?"

"Yes, and nobody would have thought much of it," said Lord Raidenstore, "if I had not told of what I saw. Then the river was searched and he was found among the weeds—poor fellow."

"Poor fellow!"

"It seemed, Lady Pearl, that he had, when but a mere boy, married a woman much beneath him, a gipsy, or tramp, or something of that sort, and he was harried out of his life by her and her friends. The woman turned out very bad, it was said at the inquiry, and there was an end of it."

Lady Pearl's hands were clasped and her eyes were fixed upon the figure below, now almost lost in the gathering darkness. The attendant brought coffee, and she mechanically took the cup Lord Raidenstore offered her. He tried his best afterwards to engage her attention and failed—only monosyllabic answers were returned to him.

In a quiet and reserved way it was a very merry party home. Tommy Dray was somewhere above the seventh heaven, sitting as close to Lucy Dashwood as he could with propriety, and exchanging whispers with her in which there was little wit but much softness. Meg shielded them from the eyes of others as well as she could and enjoyed the fun hugely.

Of all there Lady Pearl was alone sad and silent. All the efforts of her cavalier to rouse her were thrown away, and on reaching home she at once retired.

"I am fatigued," she said to Lady Ardilaun.

"The drive is a very long one."

"Twelve miles or so each way," thought her ladyship, smiling to herself. "It is not that. I wonder who has proposed?"

But nobody had proposed, and no dream of love had come to Pearl. She was thinking of the story of the Oxford student and of Hugh Egerton, linking the two together instinctively. There was some similitude in Hugh's story as far as she had heard it to that of the student. Was there a still closer resemblance, and would the end be the same?

She looked forward to his promised call with a strange interest, but the days went by and he did not come. The week crawled away and Hugh Egerton had not kept his word.

Lord Ardilaun, prepared by his too sanguine lady for a proposal from some quarter, was annoyed to find himself disappointed, and became irritable. When the time of their stay was up the point of expiring he made preparations for a move to be made.

"I think I should like to stay in town another week," said Pearl.

"We cannot stay a day," he replied, "for my term for this house has expired. I shall take you to Brighton for the winter, and in the spring we will return to Scotland."

"In the spring," thought Pearl, wearily; "a

long time between now and then. What has kept Hugh Egerton away?"

CHAPTER VII.

THE BURDEN UPON HIM.

When youth and love and bliss and beauty die,
Well may manhood give forth the soul-born sigh;
When the light fingers trill the chords no more,
Who has a heart and not the loss deplore?

NIGHT had fallen upon the Essex marshes, but the stars were yet dim with the lingering light in the sky, and the earth was faintly luminous with the reflected radiance of the heavens, so that objects some distance away stood out clearly, and the narrow road cut straight through the flat country to the Giant Dyke was as clearly defined as a frosted silver band laid upon a wide green.

It was a lonely road at any time, and doubly lonely after the sun went down, for it was a road of ill repute, haunted by the idler, the tramp, and the vagrant gipsy, who perhaps were deemed blacker than they were, and shunned as the highwaymen of a century or so ago.

The Giant Dyke was the rendezvous of the gipsies, and there on that summer night, when darkness had fairly extinguished the light, a goodly company of these nomads were gathered together, some under canvas, others in vans, and many content with a bit of a fire and the sky for a great coat.

They were not so mirthful as they have been depicted by some writers, but they were merry enough, eating and drinking such as they had, and talking of their joys or troubles of the past, and laying plans for the future.

Near one van, drawn a little apart from the rest, a small company had gathered together, two men and a woman, who spoke beneath their breath, glancing occasionally at the van as if they either feared to disturb somebody within or of being overheard.

The men were gipsies of as pure a cast as can now be found, with dark, handsome faces, splendid eyes, glistening teeth, and supple frames hardened by exercise.

Their ages were respectively six and eight and twenty, and they lay with their strong limbs stretched out with easy grace, their eyes fixed upon the woman, who sat with her hands clasping her knees, staring at the fire and slowly rocking to and fro.

She too was handsome, and strongly resembled the men, and was indeed the woman who had so startled Tommy Dray when visiting Hugh Egerton in his humble abode.

"You take on, Countycella," said the elder of the men, "as if the king of the Romany people lay a dying there."

"He is my king, Harac," she answered, speaking low, but giving emphasis to her words with a passionate gesture.

"A king, indeed," sneered the younger man, "with the face of a girl."

"But he is a MAN, Lanah," the woman said, "and gave up everything for me."

"He had nothing to give up, Countycella," said the gipsy, with a soft, cackling laugh.

"You can laugh at him now," she said, with gleaming eyes, "but how was it when he first came among us with his eighteen years upon him, a boy, some said, but too much of a man for you with his hands or arms? He thrashed you like a child and tossed you like a football when you tried your tricks upon him?"

"A done with that," said Lanah, gloomily.

"I'll not ha' done with it," she said. "If you woo a thrashing from my tongue you shall have it."

"I'd rather woo the edge of a sharp sword," Lanah said.

And Harac laughed approval.

"I know," the woman said, "that your hatred of the house dwellers was freely extended to him, and that had you not been AFRAID of him—"

"I say a done," hissed Lanah.

And Harac's brow grew black.

"I'll say no more," the woman said, "for

what matters? He lies dying there, and none of his race will come to help him."

"What said the student—he of the gloomy face?" asked Harac.

"That he would come to-day, and, lo! mid-night is upon us and we see him not."

"If he had but a common sickness," said Lanah, glancing significantly at the van, "we could heal him, but broken bones beat us. Hark! Who is that? Silver Bell gives note of a stranger."

A dog just without the camp was barking furiously, and Lanah hastened in the direction of the sound. Countycella and Harac remained with their eyes in the direction he had taken until he reappeared, bringing with him a tall gentlemanly man, Hugh Egerton by name.

"I am late," he said to the woman. "I lost my way. The roads here are so much alike. How is he?"

"Bad," she said. "I am not sure you are not too late."

A low groan escaped Hugh's lips, and the paleness that overspread his face could be seen despite the glow of the light of the fire.

"I have been walking twelve hours," he said, "with a tearing anxiety at my heart. Take me to him at once."

"You should have ridden part of the way," the woman said, as she led the way to the van.

"I have only a few pence left," said Hugh Egerton, curtly. "The rest I gave you yesterday."

Countycella's eyes were softened for a moment as she looked at him, but no word of approval of his unselfish conduct escaped her. On reaching the van she put a finger upon her lips.

"You cannot tread too lightly," she said, her voice so low that it barely reached him. "If he is sleeping we must not disturb him."

They went in silently as shadows, Countycella softly closing the door behind them.

The interior of the van was very neat and clean, and fitted up with the many contrivances the better class of nomads are so famous for—chairs that folded, a table that could be packed away in a box a foot square, cooking utensils that performed half a dozen different offices, and at the far end a couch with a clean white coverlid, the head of it shaded by a curtain from the light of a lamp fixed in the roof.

"Nesbitt," said the woman, softly, "are you asleep?"

"No," replied a refined, musical, man's voice from the couch.

She stepped up and drew the curtain aside, Hugh Egerton drawing near at the same time.

"You see who has come," she said.

The man she spoke of could at the outside be barely twenty-one, for the smoothness and roundness of youth still rested on his face. The features were delicate and refined, almost womanish in their beauty, but the effeminateness was warded off by the cut of the resolute mouth and the fearless flash of his large blue eyes.

"Dear, good Hugh," he said, "ever ready to help me. You must take my left hand to-night. The other is useless."

"Let me examine you," said Hugh.

"Touch lightly, old fellow. It seems on fire," said the other.

"As far as I can see," said Hugh, after a brief examination, "the shoulder appears to be put out and a small bone of the arm broken. How did it happen?"

"A little turn up with the keepers," said Nesbitt, smiling through his pain.

"My selfishness set him to the night work," said Countycella, biting her lip.

"She had a fancy for a young pheasant for supper," said Nesbitt, "that is all."

"When did this happen?" asked Hugh.

"Three days ago."

"And you have had no doctor?"

"We can't have the house dwellers here," said Countycella; "they see too much. You are the only one we trust, because you never have eyes for anything but him."

"Nevertheless," replied Hugh, "a doctor must be found," said Hugh. "You have no village near?"

"Not for miles."

"No habitation?"

"There is one a mile to the west—a big house where some madman lives, I suppose. Whoever it is is seldom seen."

"You can at least learn there where a doctor can be found," said Hugh. "Send a messenger—a boy or—"

"I will go myself," said Countycella.

"But are you not afraid?"

"Afraid, Nesbitt," she said, turning to the prostrate man with a smile. "You hear him."

"You are afraid of nothing," he replied.

"Except death," she said, with a sudden terror in her eyes. "Not for myself, but for you. If the grim monster should steal you away, what is there but eternal night for me?"

"By lingering here," said Hugh, "you invite him to come."

The woman said no more but stooped down and passionately kissed the face of Nesbitt, then glided out of the van as silently and swiftly as a shadow.

Hugh drew a chair to the side of the couch and sat down.

"She loves you, Nesbitt," he said.

"Ay! and her passion carries me whither she pleases like a whirlwind," was the reply.

"Is there no hope of your abandoning this life?"

"None! How can I leave it?"

"Would she not follow? Such love would carry her anywhere you wished."

"And whither are we to go, Hugh? Into what society that you and I are familiar with could I take her?—at the least it would be taking a lioness into a cage of doves."

"But could she not be trained—softened—"

"No, Hugh. You could never change her now, and even if she were dead I could never come back to the old thing."

"Why not?"

"I have sworn to live and die with the Romany people, and they have taken me into their secrets. To live I must remain with them—to attempt to leave them would be certain death!"

Hugh groaned, and he laid his hand upon Nesbitt's with the tenderness of a woman, and looked at him with a great anguish in his eyes that Nesbitt dare not look upon and turned his head away.

"Nesbitt," said he, "there was always a strong love between us—"

"No," interposed Nesbitt. "I had no real love. It was all on your side. I am a selfish hound, and in the gratification of my mad fancies have made your life miserable. Why do you not forget me? Why is it that when my greed—"

"Or the greed of those people around you, Nesbitt."

"What matters, Hugh? When greed, let us say, prompts me to send to you for money you never refuse, but pinch yourself for a worthless brother."

"You were our mother's darling. When dying she thought most of you. 'Take care of poor Nesbitt,' she said to me, with a look I can never forget. 'He will want a guiding hand.' And would you have me break the promise I made in that solemn hour? But I do not fatigue you with talking?"

"No," Nesbitt replied. "The sight of you alone gives me strength. Oh! how happy my life ought to have been, so loved—and might be happy now if—"

He paused and lowered his voice, raising his

head a little, and peering round the van as if he feared an eavesdropper. Assured of their being alone he went on:

"If I could take you and Countycella away from here, to some place far away—say in the backwoods of America—where we would be happy enough."

"Why not go?" said Hugh. "I will accompany you. I have no tie here, or none that I ought to think of."

Pearl flashed before him, but he had already shaken off what he deemed to be a vain hope, and had resolved to go near her no more. He would not voluntarily reap the bitterness of feasting his eyes upon the unattainable, and his heart must be schooled to forget. So he was ready to go to the world's end with his brother.

"I fear it can't be done," Nesbitt murmured. "If we were suspected of such an object they would kill us all. Countycella is valuable to her people. Her fortune-telling is a little gold mine to them; but I will have nothing that it brings in. I hate the whole beggarly business—I am sick of it."

"You do not like the men," said Hugh.

"They are black-hearted scoundrels for the most part," Nesbitt answered, "but they are true to each other, and have laws that cannot be broken with impunity."

"It is hard to me," he added, after a pause, "to be torn between two loves. Countycella's whole life is bound up in me. She pours out her heart to me like a torrent from the hills, and I cannot resist its force. Then when I think of you, dear Hugh, my heart aches. There is a gulf between us, which I have made, and no man can bridge it over."

"Whatever betides," said Hugh, with a look of brotherly love that put a radiance about his face, "I will not desert you. But I will talk to you no more now. Rest until Countycella returns."

A silence ensued, broken only by the muffled sounds of the gipsies round the fires, and Nesbitt, soothed by the presence of his brother, sank into a gentle sleep, from which he did not awaken until Countycella returned, accompanied by a short, thick-set man with restless eyes, who rubbed his hands in a nervous fashion as he bowed to Hugh.

"The doctor," the gipsy said. "He wanted to hide his calling from me; but I have seen too much of men."

"I do not practise down here," the doctor replied, "being merely in the neighbourhood for a change, staying with a friend, or rather at his house, but this—ah—lady—"

"I am not a lady," interposed Countycella, curtly. "Call me a woman, or Countycella."

"Well, this woman," said the doctor, "was so pressing—bordering on threatening, in fact, that I—"

"You had better look to your patient," said Hugh, cutting him short, and the doctor became immediately another man.

Stepping up to the couch where Nesbitt was still sleeping he regarded the pale, handsome face with interest for a minute or more.

"Happened with an accident near here, I presume," he said.

"It matters not to you where he met with it," said Countycella. "Look to him."

"Oh! yes, of course; but seeing he was not a gipsy—"

"Put a bridle on your tongue," she said, "and attend to your duty."

Hugh pointed out where the injury lay, and the doctor made his examination, his face growing graver as he proceeded.

"This ought to have been seen to before," he said. "I fear that inflammation has set in."

Countycella sank into a kneeling position by the couch, looking up with wild eyes at the doctor's face. The look enlightened him, and he glanced quickly from her to the wounded man with a slight smile on his face.

"Will he die?" she cried. "Tell me—let me



[THE FATAL MISSIVE.]

know the worst. Don't play fast and loose with me as you do with the house dwellers."

"I cannot say," he answered. "I will do my best. He will require great watchfulness and care."

"And you will remain with him?"

"For a time, of course," the doctor said. "Say for an hour or so—"

"An hour!" said the woman, impatiently—"a day, a week, or month. You stay until he is being restored or all hope is over."

"I don't think I could do that," said the doctor, embarrassed. "You see that I am a stranger with a friend—"

"On pleasure," said Countycella. "And will you let your pleasure stand before his life? No, you do not leave here until I know the best or worst."

"It is not necessary that the doctor should remain," said Hugh, "after he has set the bone and put the shoulder right—"

"Which cannot be done until the inflammation is subdued," the doctor murmured. "His shoulder must be bathed every half-hour, until it has been got under. Anyone can see to the getting of hot water and do the bathing."

"I will do it," said Hugh.

"And I, meanwhile, can go back and get a little sleep," the doctor said. "You may rely on my coming early in the morning."

"I will take care of that," replied Countycella, grimly. "I will go and keep watch without your house and bring you back again. The camp fires are burning," she added to Hugh, "and I will see that your call for hot water is obeyed, and I know that I can trust your love for him."

Again she stooped down and kissed the pale face, then beckoning to the doctor to follow, glided out, leaving the two brothers together—one pale with a suffering, and the other bowed down by sorrow, and Death lingering near, waiting to dart upon his prey.

(To be Continued.)

HER BITTER FOE;

OR,

A STRUGGLE FOR A HEART.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Lost Through Gold," "Strong Temptation,"

&c. &c.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE PLOT PROGRESSES.

Love is strong as death, and jealousy is as cruel as the grave.

ROSALIE NORTON never swerved one iota from her purpose. It was her one aim to become Keith Jocelyn's wife and she cared little whose hopes she blighted—whose hearts she broke in the undertaking.

After that first meeting Keith never refused an invitation to Lord Norton's. He loved Ethel still, but he had not forgiven her for preferring exile from himself to a secret marriage. Rosalie knew of his engagement, therefore he thought there could be no wrong to her in their intimacy. The richest heiress of the day and the most courted would hardly suffer her affections to fasten themselves upon a man whom she knew belonged to another.

So it came about that in the first weeks of Ethel's absence, whilst the poor child was finding the days a weariness because he was not with her, Keith took to spending all his leisure time at Lord Norton's and in public he was ever at Rosalie's side, her devoted cavalier.

Maude and her mother saw no wrong to their absent favourite. They knew that Rosalie was aware of Keith's engagement. To their high sense of honour it was simply impossible that

she could strive to supplant Ethel in his affections. They looked on the intimacy with an indulgent eye, never thinking the heiress would seek to obtain anything but friendship from Keith.

Maude might have been keener sighted. She knew that Rosalie had once loved her brother, but whenever she was alone with Miss Norton the latter always inquired pointedly for Miss Devreux and lamented the cruelty which separated her from her lover.

The season was over. Lady Jocelyn, contrary to her intentions, took Maude abroad. The girl was wan and thin. Sir Geoffrey Hamilton and his pretty Louise joined the party. Keith, declaring he had had enough of foreign parts, accepted an invitation from Lord Norton.

"Are you wise?" his brother-in-law asked him, when he heard of this.

Keith stared at Sir Geoffrey in haughty surprise. Few men brooked interference so little as our hero.

"What do you mean?"

Sir Geoffrey was not a whit taken aback by the tone. He thought it his duty to speak plainly.

"Considering you are an engaged man, are you wise to throw yourself for weeks into the constant companionship of such a fascinating woman as Rosalie Norton?"

"Good heavens! Hamilton. Do you doubt my honour?" thundered Keith, almost beside himself with rage and annoyance.

"I never doubted that. I certainly question your power to see through the plots of such a scheming woman of the world as Miss Norton."

"I will not hear a word against her," said Keith, hotly. "No lady's name should be dragged into such a discussion."

"Granted," returned Geof, with inimitable coolness. "Only let me ask you one question. Does she know that you are an engaged man? Just answer me this."

"She has known it all along."

Geoffrey shrugged his shoulders.

"Then her conduct bears but one explanation.

She is trying to rival Miss Devreux in your affections."

"It is Miss Devreux's fault that anyone has the chance," said Keith, angrily. "Had she loved me a little better than forms and ceremonies she would be my wife now."

"She will never be your wife if you accept this invitation to Norton Castle."

"I have accepted it."

"Don't quibble about words, Keith. You know I mean if you go there."

"I shall go there."

Geoffrey felt it was useless to speak to him, still, for the sake of the girl he remembered a pretty child bridesmaid at his own wedding, he made one more effort.

"Have you thought of the impression this will convey to Miss Devreux?"

"She is amusing herself," coldly.

"Keith, how can you? Poor child! There is not much chance of amusement for anyone at Devreux Court, I should imagine."

"Not when the pet eligible of our London season makes it his home."

"What do you mean, Keith?"

"The Marquis of Allonby has gone there on a visit. I quite understand Sir Claude's rejection now; he wants a peer for his son-in-law."

"I don't believe Allonby's there. I met him only the other day in the park."

"He's there fast enough. Well, if a coronet has so much charm for Ethel I cannot help it. She knows she has only to ask for her release."

"You forget that if she married you she would equally enjoy a coronet."

"Yes, but only in the future. She may not care to wait."

"You are perfectly incorrigible, Keith!"

"Am I? And he threw back his head with a gesture of sudden pain. "Geoff, I cannot help it. My whole life is one long torture."

"My dear fellow!" seriously alarmed.

"What can you be talking of?"

"I loved her so," said Keith, half brokenly.

"I wouldn't say as much to anyone else, but I don't mind your knowing. I think I would have given up the whole world only for her sake."

"You won't need to do that. In a very little time you can be married openly, without let or hindrance. You only need to wait and be patient."

"Wait and be patient while Allonby is dancing attendance upon her?"

"You don't show much trust in your betrothed."

"That is my misfortune. I have a jealous nature. I always have had."

"Quite time you were cured then. Look here, Keith, I am a man of the world and I know something of women. If ever there was truth written on a girl's face it is written on Ethel Devreux's."

Keith wrung his hands, but he did not give up his idea of going to Norton. Rosalie welcomed him with perfect grace. In her whole manner there was nothing to show that she had given him her heart unasked. If she gave him more attention than her other guests, if she seemed ever ready to sympathise with whatever mood he found himself in, there was nothing reprehensible in that.

The Count de Rossi was at the Castle. Carlos had learned all that was needed to make him understand Rosalie's story. He knew quite well that he could claim her promise only if she failed to win Keith Jocelyn.

The Italian's devotion was a strange one. He loved Rosalie as his own soul, but he was not jealous of Keith. He knew quite well that the happiness of the girl's whole life was wound up in Mr. Jocelyn, that if Rosalie became Countess de Rossi she would only bring to her husband a broken heart, and yet he had not strength to tear himself away, and he lingered at Norton because it was happiness to him to breathe the same air as his idol, to see her beauty, and hear the southern music of her voice—music as soft and rich as though in very truth she had been born a daughter of his own sunny land.

"I thought Lord Allonby would have been

here," said a gentleman one evening in the drawing-room.

Keith listened eagerly for the reply.

"We could not attract the marquis," said Rosalie, with pretty humility. "He wrote my aunt a note full of excuses, whose only purport—that we could make out—was that he thought it would be most delightful to be at Norton, only that it was most *extra* delightful to be where he then was."

Everyone laughed. Most people knew how thoroughly Jack detested letter writing.

"Where is he?" asked Keith.

Rosalie was determined the answer should not come from her. She had been scheming that he should ask that very question.

"At Devreux Court," said a pretty, well-preserved matron, who, having no daughters to marry, did not grudge Lord Allonby to his cousin. "He is to marry Miss Devreux, people say—a most suitable arrangement."

She had been away from England for a long time, and had no notion that Ethel Devreux had been almost like one of the Jocelyn family, much less that Keith had—well, to put it mildly—admired her. But some others present knew or suspected this, and Mrs. Desney's statement was received in the most perfect silence; you might have heard a pin drop.

"I hope I haven't been betraying secrets," said that lady, good-humouredly. "You see I have been staying near the Court, and I used often to see the cousins riding out together, and I must say no two young people ever seemed better matched."

Poor Keith! His Ethel, his golden-haired darling, well matched with a Saxon giant, whose friends could only say of him that when you came to know him he was not so very plain after all. Mr. Jocelyn let his lip till the blood nearly came.

It was natural, of course; it was only sweet and womanly that Rosalie—the only person present who knew that at this very moment he was actually engaged to Ethel—should seize the first opportunity to express her sympathy. It was a lovely evening, and someone proposed an expedition to the neighbouring wood to hear the nightingale. The fair young hostess contrived to be the last to leave the house, and that Keith Jocelyn's strong arm should be ready for her support.

She looked like some fair vision of dreamland in the soft, silvery moonlight. She wore her favourite colours, white and crimson. Nothing could have become her better; her dress was open at the throat, revealing her beautiful swan-like neck, and her fair, rounded arms were bare to the elbow.

"You will take cold," said Keith, gently.

"Oh, no."

But he went back to the house and fetched a silvery gossamer shawl in which the young heiress was wont to wrap herself. By the time this was adjusted the delay had separated them entirely from the rest of the party; perhaps Rosalie had planned it so.

"I wanted to speak to you," she said to him, softly, raising her liquid eyes to his face in mute entreaty. "I was so sorry you should have had to listen to that idle gossip. I would have prevented it had I been able, but I had no idea Mrs. Desney knew anyone near Devreux Court."

"If it were only gossip it would not pain me."

"It can be nothing else," she said, firmly. "You surely cannot think Miss Devreux would forget her plighted troth!"

"I don't know what to think," he said, gloomily. "Allonby is a far better match than I am, Miss Norton."

"And do you think we consider nothing but worldly motives? You give us poor women a sad character, Mr. Jocelyn."

"I could never think such a thing of you," with a dangerous emphasis on the "you."

"And you must think it less than ever of your future wife. She cannot help being beautiful. It is not her fault that Lord Allonby admires her. I remember, poor fellow, how he used to watch her when she was in town, and

then I know Sir Claude is very fond of him. Miss Devreux herself told me so."

Warm defence of Ethel, all this seemed; it was really the most cunning blame. Miss Devreux knew the marquis loved her, and that he was a great favourite with her father. When she went to the Court, therefore, she knew she should be exposed to his attentions, and yet she had preferred to go than yield up something of her dignity and consent to a secret marriage.

"She has an able champion in you," said Keith, bitterly.

"You are too suspicious, Mr. Jocelyn," said the girl, quickly. "I believe you are condemning her on the idle gossip of a stranger."

"No; I shall never believe her false until she tells me so herself."

"Tells you so?"

It spoke badly for Rosalie Norton's plans, if indeed he would condemn his fair-haired love only upon her own confession.

Keith took something from his pocket, a little leather case. Opening it he showed to Rosalie a withered rose.

"I would not tell anyone else," he said, simply. "It was a fancy of hers that we should exchange flowers. When I received the counterpart of this rose I shall know that all is over; till then I will trust her still."

Rosalie looked long and intently upon the withered flower, as though she wished to impress its photograph upon her memory for all time, and the moon favoured the idea. It came out from behind a cloud and shone down brightly upon the pair and the faded blossom.

They said no more; not another word came from either until they returned to the house. Rosalie was too good a general to spoil her plot by over haste. She wanted Keith to think carefully over all she had said; she knew he would not go to Devreux Court, but she fancied he would write.

He might pretend that so long as Ethel did not send him the withered flower, no matter what people said, his faith was unshaken; but all the same Rosalie believed that Mrs. Desney's words had gone home.

The post bag always left the Castle twice, at eleven and three, and the earlier time certainly was the favourite. So many of the guests liked to write their letters in the interval between afternoon tea and the dressing-bell, while the more energetic correspondents sometimes consumed the midnight oil and wrote pleasant, gossiping letters in their own rooms before retiring to rest.

"Grandpapa," said Rosalie, the next morning, disturbing the peer over a solitary, late breakfast, "will you lend me the key of the post bag, I want to add something to one of my letters?"

There were two keys to the important bag, one kept by Lord Norton, the other by the butler, who unlocked the bag twice a day to hand its contents to the post boy. Rosalie fancied her grandfather would be the less likely of the two to consider her conduct singular.

"Bring it me back, child, directly you have done with it," said the old peer; "it must not be left about."

In less than a quarter of an hour the key was reposing in its accustomed place in the baronet's pocket, and Rosalie, alone in her dressing-room with the door locked, was looking eagerly at two letters directed in the bold, clear hand she knew so well, the one to Miss Devreux, the other to Sir Claude Devreux, Baronet.

She had not stopped at much, but there was a pitch of meanness to which Rosalie felt she could not stoop. She had stolen Keith's letters, but she would not read them. In the privacy of her dressing-room she lighted a candle and burnt the two missives to ashes in its flame.

Two days passed and Keith's manner changed. There was a strange watchfulness and expectation, an intense eagerness about him.

Rosalie noticed how his hand shook in examining his letters and the blank look of disappointment which always came to his face as he finished the survey.

"He will not write again," thought Rosalie; "he is proud, now is the time to act. Carlos"

She had stolen to the count's side as he stood idly looking out of the long French windows.

No one heard the familiar address save the count. He started.

"Rosalie, mia."

"You said once I was to come to you in trouble," she murmured.

"I am your slave now and always."

"Hush! not here; people may listen. Go through the windows into the grounds and I will follow you."

"And now what is it?" asked the count, when they stood together in a leafy shrubbery, well screened from curious eyes.

"It is something hard and difficult, Carlos."

"I will do it, though it cost my life."

"It is not that. I do not mean there is peril, but you will not like it."

"I shall like any task you set."

"Do you remember the first day we met in England?" she asked, a little nervously.

"I never forgot a meeting with you."

"Can you remember where we met?"

"Perfectly."

"I want you to go there again."

The count bowed in perfect silence.

"You will not refuse me, Carlos?"

"My queen, I could not. You have but to command, I to obey," and he kissed her hand.

"I want you to go there and post this letter, Carlos. You must guard the secret carefully."

"I do not understand," he said, simply.

"Why must it be posted there? Why not here? The Signor Jocelyn need never guess the hand that penned it."

"It would not do," excitedly. "Carlos, this letter must be posted there. If you will not go I must, only the risk for me is terrible."

"Say no more, Rosalie; I will go."

She trusted him implicitly. No thought of his betraying her ever entered her head. She knew that he had no will but hers. Through the greatness, the intensity of his love, Carlos was as pliable as wax in her hands.

There was a strange, fitful gaiety about Rosalie the whole of the following day. She could not settle to anything.

"You are the spirit of unrest," said Mrs. Desney to her, pleasantly. "The thought of your travels must be upsetting you."

For on the following morning the merry party at Norton was to be broken up, and soon after the baron, with Rosalie and her aunt, would leave England for the Continent.

"I am excited," admitted Rosalie. "I am expecting a letter."

"Don't expect it too much," said Keith Jocelyn, who chanced to be standing by, a little sadly.

"Why not?"

"You might be disappointed."

"You are a prophet of evil."

"I hope not a true one."

"How is Maude? I have not half forgiven her for disappointing us of a long visit."

"My mother writes that she is much better—quite herself. They are going home to Jocelyn to-morrow."

"I hope they will not claim your company," said gentle Mrs. Norton, pleasantly. "My father quite depends upon your joining us on our tour, Mr. Jocelyn."

Keith smiled.

"I shall be very pleased. Few people are so kind to me as you and Lord Norton."

"That is not fair," whispered Rosalie in his ear. "Other people would be kind if their father would allow them."

He shook his head sorrowfully.

"Why don't you go to the Court?" hoping devoutly he would not.

"And be refused admittance?" proudly. "No, I have written."

"Well, I will be a more cheerful prophet than you were to me. I predict you will hear to-morrow."

The morrow, directly after breakfast, Keith sought her in the morning-room, where he found her alone.

"You were right, Miss Norton. I did hear."

"And you are happy?"

"Happy! Look here."

And he showed her a faded flower.

CHAPTER XXVII.

TOO LATE.

For of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these, "It might have been."

JACK TREMAYNE, Marquis of Allonby, was not what is called a clever man. His friends generally looked upon him as a good-natured simpleton, but the moment he caught sight of the announcement of his own marriage to Ethel Devreux he felt convinced something was seriously wrong.

His own intimacy with Ethel was known to no one beyond the immediate neighbourhood, simple, kindly people, who would never have dreamed of perpetrating such a fraud. The deception was evidently for some purpose. It could not influence himself or Ethel. It must therefore be to prejudice Keith Jocelyn.

Who of all the world would have the most interest in deceiving Keith? Jack was equal to the problem. He knew that Rosalie Norton showed Mr. Jocelyn more encouragement than any of her professed suitors. His anger had been excited even before he came to Devreux by the easy way in which Keith seemed to transfer his allegiance from Ethel to Miss Norton.

Since he had known the truth that his beautiful cousin was Mr. Jocelyn's plighted wife, his blood had positively boiled at learning of Keith's long visit to Norton Castle.

He never told Ethel. Deeply as he loved her, he never sought to weaken her trust in her betrothed, for Jack knew that Ethel had given her heart for all time, and that to induce her to doubt Keith would be to make her less happy, not more so.

Very hurriedly he glanced over the other papers to see that they contained no copy of the fatal announcement; then, braving Sir Claude's wrath at the abstraction of his favourite paper, he crushed the "Times" into his pocket, and turned to meet Ethel and Mrs. Grey with the best attempt at carelessness he could manage.

Years after, when he was a husband, he told his wife that no breakfast had ever seemed to him so interminable as that one. As soon as it was over, and Sir Claude in the seclusion of the library, he said to Ethel:

"I am going to take you for a drive. Go and get ready at once."

When she was fairly gone Jack calmly locked the door, produced the crumpled newspaper from his pocket, and handed it to Mrs. Grey.

"Read that."

He was not prepared for the change in her face. Her pallor changed to a hectic flush, her lovely eyes glowed with excitement.

"It will break Mr. Jocelyn's heart," she said, sadly. "Oh, Lord Allonby, won't you go and tell him it is not true."

"I mean to, Mrs. Grey, I can trust you to keep all this from Ethel?"

"Oh, yes."

"You see," lowering his voice, "if Jocelyn reads this he may do something desperate. I shall travel night and day until I find him, but I've no idea where he is, so it may be a week quite before he knows the truth."

"Do you think he would—"

Her voice would not finish the sentence.

"Commit suicide," guessing her fears. "Not a bit of it, he's not that sort of fellow. No, what I'm afraid of is that he may marry someone else."

"Marry someone else? But he loves Ethel."

"Depend upon it, Mrs. Grey," impressively, touting the advertisement, "this was an enemy's work. It's equally certain that enemy was a woman."

"Ethel has no enemy in the world, unless it

be someone who would like to be Keith Jocelyn's wife instead of her."

Mrs. Grey sat down, she was trembling violently in every limb.

"You are not fit to be so worried," said Jack, gently, almost affectionately. "But I wanted you to guard the secret from Ethel."

"I will guard it with my life."

Ethel came downstairs. They could hear her voice carolling the refrain of a song. Jack hastened to unfasten the door. He had already taken upon himself to order the carriage.

"Now then, Ethel, you are to have the honour of driving me to the station."

"To the station, Jack! What do you mean?"

"I am going to town on the most important business."

"Jack, we shall miss you so."

"I wouldn't go unless it were really necessary. I shall get back as soon as ever I can."

The strange gravity upon his face, the speaking sadness of Mrs. Grey's, was not lost upon Ethel.

"Jack, I am sure there is something the matter. Someone is ill."

"You foolish child."

"You have had bad news."

"The worst news I've had is of a wedding. There, are you satisfied now?"

Although he had spoken of Ethel's driving him, Jack had ordered the barouche, and the coachman and footman were in attendance. Ethel sprang lightly in, Jack followed, and the gallant horses bore them swiftly onwards.

"Well, this is strange. I never thought when I got up to-day that anything would happen."

"Nor I," Jack rejoined. "I shall make haste back, Ethel. The Court always seems more like home to me than any other place."

"I'm glad it's going to be yours, Jack."

"Are you?" a little absently.

"You must marry a very nice wife."

"I'll think about it. Ethel, you must take care of Mrs. Grey. I never saw anyone look so ill as she does to-day."

"And yet she never complains. Jack, I often fancy she must have had some dreadful sorrow to make her what she is."

"Perhaps."

They were at the station now and only just in time to catch the train. Another five minutes and Ethel was driving home alone, and Jack, his assumed cheerfulness a thing of the past, with knitted brows and frowning face, was perusing for the dozenth time or so that wonderful announcement in the "Times."

Arrived in London his task began. He knew quite well that it would not be an easy thing to find a man who, like Keith Jocelyn, had no settled home of his own, and was a welcome guest at everyone else's, but he had never imagined one half the difficulties of his task.

He drove first to the bachelor chambers Keith had occupied the previous season, but there he could only learn that Mr. Jocelyn had given up the rooms in July, all letters and parcels were to be forwarded on to Jocelyn Manor.

Cadogan Street was his next venture. Here no better success greeted him. The old house-keeper knew nothing whatever of her young master; the earl and countess had been in "furrin parts," but they were at the Manor now and Miss Maude with them; as for Mr. Keith she had heard nothing of him.

Jack strolled into one or two clubs and heard that Jocelyn had never been there since he left London with the Nortons at the close of the season.

He lingered in London two days. He made inquiries of everyone likely to know Keith's whereabouts, and he learned nothing. His bankers certainly had seen Keith a month previously, and he had told them he should not be in London for some time, they need not trouble to forward communications as none that might come would be of any importance.

It was Monday, the thirty-first of October, when Keith left the Court, it was the third of November when the bright idea seized him of

going down to Jocelyn Manor and questioning the earl and countess.

Lord and Lady Jocelyn were from home at a dinner party, the butler said, but Miss Jocelyn was in the drawing-room.

Jack started as he saw her. Was this lonely girl with the thin face and delicate pink colour the creature he had known so bright and joyous only three months or so before?

She started upon hearing his name; then rising from her sofa she advanced a few steps to meet him as the servant vanished.

"This is an unexpected honour, Lord Allonby."

Could those cool, sarcastic tones be Maude Jocelyn's? Jack hardly believed his ears, then he remembered she had doubtless seen the advertisement.

"Miss Jocelyn," he began, in a simple, manly way, yet with more confidence than he had ever felt before, "I can see you are prejudiced against me. I do not care to defend myself. A great wrong has been done me, I am only anxious that that wrong should not make others suffer. I came to London on Monday to find your brother; I have sought for him in vain. I am here to-night to ask you for his address."

Maude shuddered.

"You must not fight a duel—indeed you must not. Think of Ethel!"

Very gently Jack led her back to the sofa; then sitting down uninvited by her side, he asked:

"Will you listen to me for five minutes, Miss Jocelyn? I promise you I can remove all the doubts I see you entertain of me."

Maude bowed her head.

"I have been at Devreux Court for weeks. I look upon it as my second home; but the very night of my arrival my cousin told me of her engagement to your brother, and let me see that I never could be more to her than a brother. I stayed on, partly because I was happy, partly because it was a dull life for one so young and pretty as Ethel. She fretted a great deal at the separation from Mr. Jocelyn and I thought my presence made the Court a little more cheerful. We are cousins. We were brought up as brother and sister. Her father approved our intimacy. A lady who keeps his house—as true and pure a gentlewoman as any peeress—saw no evil in it; nor did I until last Monday, I read a cruel falsehood in the 'Times'—no less than a statement that Ethel and I had been married two days before."

"And that was false?"

"So false that I felt it must be an enemy's work. I rushed up to London at once to see your brother and join with him in detecting the culprit."

"And Ethel?"

"Ethel is the true-hearted girl you knew of old. Her one hope is for the time when you and she may resume your intimacy."

Maude burst into tears.

"There has been cruel treachery at work."

"But I have had no hand in it."

"Someone must have worked secretly to make Keith miserable. He heard hints of your attentions to Ethel, and he wrote both to her and her father."

"They never had the letters."

"Are you sure?"

"Sir Claude would scorn to suppress the letters; besides, he has very little to do with the postbag."

Something in the young man's voice, even more than his words, convinced Maude of his truth. Her old love, the love never conquered, in striving against which she had lost her health and strength, returned tenfold, and she murmured:

"How we have misjudged you!"

"Yes; I seem to have been made out a pretty black sheep amongst everybody. Never mind. Only give me your brother's address and let me go to tell him all I have told you."

But Maude's face was still sad. She did not look at all hopeful as to the result of his mission to Keith.

"Do you disbelieve what I say, Miss Jocelyn?"

"I believe it every syllable."

"Do you think your brother will refuse to listen to me?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then why are you so grave and sad?"

"I cannot help it."

"Keith will soon know the truth," soothingly.

"Yes."

But still that agony upon her face.

"And," continued Jack, gaily, "he will have a private postman who guarantees the safeness of his letters. Anything he cares to trust to I will undertake to deliver into Ethel's own hands."

"Poor Ethel!"

Maude was once more sobbing bitterly, and Jack hardly knew how to comfort her. Taking one of her thin hands in his, he said:

"You are too fragile to be startled by a great, rough fellow like me, but I so wanted to clear this matter up I would see you."

"You have done me good," she answered. "Oh! you don't know what it has been to think of Ethel as false after all our friendship."

"You never need think of that again. My only wonder is that knowing her as you do you could ever have believed it."

"But I knew you loved her."

"So I did," admitted Jack, "but I shouldn't care to marry her if she loved your brother."

"But she might have loved you."

Jack sighed.

"There is little in me to win love," he said, bluntly. "I know that well enough."

A crimson blush coloured Maude's cheek, and Jack thought how odd it was he had never noticed how very pretty she was before.

"You will give me Keith's address," he resumed.

"He is in Italy with the Nortons."

"He easily consoled himself for Ethel's loss."

"Don't blame him," pleaded Maude. "I don't think, Jack," using the peer's name in all unconsciousness, "he knew what he was doing when he proposed to Rosalie. He loved Ethel and he had lost her. He cared nothing what happened."

"Good gracious! You don't mean to say that he is actually engaged to Miss Norton?"

"Yes."

"And it is not a week since my imaginary wedding. He has lost no time."

"You forget; he heard from Ethel—that is, he believed it was from her—claiming her freedom long ago."

"He did not hear from Ethel."

"Who could it have been?" a dim fear at her heart. "It was a cruel imposture."

"There was only one person in the world to reap advantage from it."

"You cannot mean Rosalie?"

"I do. If ever woman loved man she loved your brother. I suspected that long ago, but I never thought she would stoop to such villainy as this."

Maude handed him a card.

"That is the address of Keith's last letter. I hope you may be in time."

"But you fear it."

"I do. There was no cause for delay, and Lord Norton, who is in delicate health, was very anxious the wedding should take place at once. Keith held back, I guessed why, because his heart was still Ethel's, but I fear the announcement in Monday's 'Times' would drive him to desperation."

"It is a recognised engagement then?"

"Yes; the Nortons are delighted. Papa and mamma I think are a little proud that Keith should make such a match after being refused so cavalierly by Sir Claude."

"Poor little Ethel," said Jack, tenderly, "her place has soon been filled."

"But Keith loves her," murmured Maude, "and I love her. I never could believe her false even when it seemed so certain."

"Heaven bless you, Maude."

"You will stay," she urged. "Papa and mamma will be so disappointed to miss you."

"I must return by the eight o'clock train. I shall start for Italy to-morrow."

"You will take something," she urged. "Have you dined?"

He declared he had, but the butler appearing with a dainty tea-tray, he did not refuse some of that pleasant beverage, and as he sipped it he wondered more and more at the change in Maude.

"What on earth have you done to yourself?"

"I have been ill."

"Anyone can see that. What has been the matter?"

"No one seems to know quite."

"I do."

"You!" blushing worse than ever. "I am sure you can't tell, Lord Allonby."

"You called me Jack a little while ago."

"I was very rude."

"Maudie, you have been fretting for Ethel." "Yes," delighted he had hit upon that belief.

"We are both very fond of Ethel. Do you know, Maude, I have learned to look upon her quite as a sister. I can give her to your brother without a regret."

"I am so glad," cheerfully; then, anxiously, "if only Keith can break off this entanglement."

"Oh, he's sure to be able to do that."

A long silence, broken by the marquis.

"Maudie, do you believe in second love?"

"For some people," slowly. "We Jocelyns never love twice."

"I wish I could teach you to believe that second love is stronger than first sometimes," said Jack, tenderly. "Maudie, if you would only forget my folly of a few months ago and trust yourself to me I would make you so happy, dear. I would teach you that second love was worth having."

The thin fingers slipped into his.

"But remember, Jack, Ethel may be free."

Jack never hesitated.

"Ethel is like the Jocelyns; she will never love twice. Maudie, if you are to love but once, do you think that once can be for me?"

And with downcast eyes the girl confessed that it had been for him even when his own seemed given to another.

Happy as they were, Jack did not forget the errand on which he was bound. Barely a quarter of an hour after Maudie had promised to be his marchioness he left her to break the news to her parents and set off on his solitary return to town.

Two days later he was in the quiet Italian town where the Nortons were staying. Driving to their temporary home he was struck by a crowd, and, inquiring of his driver what it meant, heard that there had been a wedding that morning at the English church, and the people were waiting to see the bride pass to her carriage. An unaccountable impulse made Jack bid the driver stop.

Another instant and Rosalie, in bridal white, orange blossoms and myrtle twisted in her hair, came out into the November sunshine leaning on Keith Jocelyn's arm.

(To be Continued.)

PARASOLS made to resemble a large sunflower have broke out into fashion in Paris.

The books of the Deptford Small-pox Hospital, which institution takes patients from the whole of the parishes of the metropolis, contain remarkable evidence of the efficiency of vaccination in preventing small-pox from resulting fatally. During the six months ended June 30 last, 546 cases were admitted to the hospital. The vaccinated patients numbered 326, and the unvaccinated 220, and those in which it was not known whether the patients had been vaccinated or not 46. The deaths among the vaccinated cases numbered only six, or a percentage of 2.5; whilst of the unvaccinated patients 127 died, making an average mortality of 43 in the 100. Of the 46 doubtful cases, nine of the patients died.

TRUE TILL DEATH; OR, A FAILURE OF JUSTICE.

CHAPTER XVI.

I am revenge—sent from the infernal kingdom.
Confer with me of murder and of death.

For a few days Dennis remained quietly in the secluded inn in which he had taken up his abode, seldom leaving his room till the sun had set, and then wandering far away from the habitations of men into the woods, shunning all intercourse with his kind, and leading an almost solitary existence.

The village people (for there were a few cottages around the inn, so few, however, that they hardly deserved to be classed as a village) looked on him as "a bit queer, but a harmless being enough," and soon grew accustomed to seeing his tall figure and dark, unshaven visage as he stalked silently through the green lanes of a night, his head bent down on his chest, and his eyes fixed on the ground, and he was allowed to come and go at his pleasure without question or remark from anyone, and passed hours meditating over his purpose, which was gradually assuming a set form in his mind.

One night as he was sitting in the arbour at the end of the inn garden two familiar voices fell on his ear, voices that it seemed to him he had heard long years ago in a different state of existence, as it were, and which brought back the past vividly before him, so vividly that he trembled and quaked as he sat hidden by the ivy and clematis from the sight of the speakers.

"Well, Mrs. Merton left her all her property, you know, so Mrs. Vanstone must be a rich widow now—a catch for some young fellow, say?"

A rich widow! What did they mean?

He listened eagerly.

"I don't envy the man who gets her," said the other voice. "She's spiteful and extravagant, in spite of her pretty face. She's trying to ruin Miss Ray's character now by spreading some report of her and Vanstone. Well, poor chap, he's done for, at any rate. What a fearful wreck it has been—not a soul saved, they say."

"No; all hands lost but the carpenter and cook's boy. There's been fearful weather off the Lizard these last few days. Poor souls! It is a terrible business."

And then the voices died away, and the two Hartford farmers passed on, leaving Dennis thunderstruck and almost stupefied by the news he had heard.

The Bertha wrecked! All hands lost! Then he was believed to be a dead man—and somehow the thought made him shudder.

Then he thought of the crowd of human beings, full of life and health and hope, with wives and children, husbands, fathers, and mothers, with friends and relations waiting to meet and welcome them at the end of their voyage, perhaps, with fair prospects before them, and hearts full of hopes and happiness—all lost, all gone; and he—the most miserable and hopeless of men—saved!

He tottered rather than walked back to the inn, and asked for the papers. A pile were given him, and in one four or five days old he read the account of the terrible disaster, and how all the three hundred and sixty souls who had sailed that evening from Plymouth had met a sudden and fearful end, either dashed to death against the rocks on which the relentless sea had driven them, or devoured by the green, hungry waters.

When he had finished reading he paid his bill, left the inn, and set off at once with hurried steps in the direction of Hartford.

A long, weary way it was—fifty miles

at least—but ere morning Dennis had performed thirty miles of his task, and passed the next day hidden in a lonely coppice on a hillside, and when darkness again fell he started on his journey once more, and before morning was hidden in a thick fir plantation on the borders of Hartford Moor, and not three miles from Stoneyvale.

He had brought a small stock of provisions with him, and made a hearty meal before lying down amongst the damp bushes and brushwood to sleep, and it was near sunset when he woke again and realised that his journey was ended, and that it only remained for him now to settle his account at once and for ever with Eleanor.

As he sat gloomily in the fast-gathering twilight, half hidden in the hedge that divided the plantation where he had passed the day from the moor, the voice of a woman singing in the distance fell on his ear.

He listened eagerly, and a red, tigerish light came into his eyes. It was Eleanor's voice—he recognised it instantly—and looking out from amongst the bushes he perceived her in the distance sauntering quietly across the moor alone.

She wore a black dress, and her long hair was plaited in thick coils around her small, snappily head; her hat was carried carelessly in her hand, and she sang gaily, almost defiantly, as she tripped along, bursting now and then into a little rippling laugh.

Had she heard of the wreck? he wondered. If so, she was doubtless rejoicing in the recovery of perfect freedom, rejoicing over his supposed death, rejoicing in the belief that she was her own mistress once more.

And he was right. Eleanor had heard the news, and without a pang of regret—nay, with positive satisfaction—and had found it a hard task to assume even a decent outward show of sorrow.

She had kept the house for two days after the tidings reached her, and refused to see anyone; then a friend or two had been admitted, and it became evident that Mrs. Vanstone's condition was not so bad as might have been expected—that she bore up wonderfully—in fact, was not in need of comforters, and many remarks were passed by the Hartford folk and by her Garford friends on the extraordinary want of feeling displayed by her for her husband's terrible fate.

She certainly did not look in need of consolation that evening as she strolled leisurely along, swinging her hat to and fro, and Dennis laughed bitterly to himself when he thought how her song would cease and her face change at the sight of him.

As she passed, not a hundred yards from where he sat, he slipped gently from his place of concealment and followed her, sheltered by the hedge. The sound of his footsteps, however, fell on her ear, and she halted and looked around.

All was quiet; not a soul was in sight, not a sound was to be heard, only a curlew repeated its wild, monotonous cry in the distance, and the wind whistled low through the tall reeds in the swamp hard by.

No, there was nobody in sight, and after a moment's hesitation Eleanor walked on at a slightly quickened pace.

Dennis followed, and taking advantage of some stunted bushes which sheltered him from her view, got nearer and nearer to her, and at length, with a sudden grip, laid his hand on her shoulder.

With a startled scream she looked up, and her face turned deadly white when she met his fierce eyes fixed on hers and recognised in the tattered, unshaven, gaunt face above her the features of the husband she had believed to be sleeping in the depths of the green ocean, out of her way for evermore.

"Dennis!" she gasped, after a moment's silence, in a hoarse whisper. "Dennis, is it really you?"

He laughed.

"Ay, come back to you from the grave, Eleanor. Why do you not tell me I am welcome?"

She tried to smile, but the smile died away on her colourless lips, and she trembled violently.

He looked at her grimly, as if enjoying her terror.

"I look like a ghost, no doubt, else why should you fear me? Why should a good wife fear her husband, let him be as wan and travel-stained as may be? Say you are glad to see me, Eleanor."

Her lips trembled, and she essayed to speak, but the words refused to come.

"Do not look at me so, Dennis," she muttered, at last. "Your eyes are terrible. Why do you look at me like that?"

And she raised her hand to shelter herself from his gaze, and tried to release herself from his grasp, but to no purpose.

"Why do I look at you, Eleanor! A pretty question," he replied, jestingly. "Come, sit here on the bank beside me and let us talk. Do you know why I have come back?"

And he stooped down and almost whispered the words into her ear.

"Why you have come back!" she echoed. "You were saved from the wreck, I suppose, and—"

He shook his head.

"No, I have not been wrecked, Eleanor," he answered. "Listen. I will tell you my history. I went on board the Bertha at the docks, and when we got out to sea I met a friend. Guess who, Eleanor?"

"Who! I cannot guess. Tell me," she replied.

"A friend who told me some news—a sailor. Guess now, Eleanor," he continued.

But she looked puzzled and shook her head. Then her heart gave a wild throb and then almost stopped beating, and her face became pale as death.

"Yes, it was Gerald Ray I met. You know it, I see," he replied, slowly.

For a moment they were silent, and the beating of their hearts might almost have been heard. Then Eleanor with a sudden movement started up and moved in the direction of the open moor. Dennis was beside her in a moment.

"Stop. I have not finished. I have more to tell you, Eleanor. I know all now. Gerald told me all."

"All!" she cried, facing him, with a strange light glowing in her eyes.

"Yes; how you met him that morning when, in my madness, I made you my wife, and told you he was married."

"Yes, and what more? Did he tell you what more passed?" she cried, excitedly.

"Yes, all," repeated Dennis.

"The mean wretch, to prate of his conquests, of the love a woman felt for him, and which he refused and threw aside."

"What! poor wretch, you loved him then," replied Dennis, contemptuously.

"Yes," she replied, stung by his tone. "I loved him. Ah," (and she laughed), "did you think it was for love of you I married you? No. I thought he loved Hilda Ray, that is why I robbed her of you, and deceived you about her. And after all I found I was wrong and that he had stooped to a shepherd's daughter—slighted my love for a low girl like Maggie Donovan. I hated Hilda Ray, and to show him there were others ready to take me though he rejected me I married you."

"Ah! just so, you ruined me and that poor girl yonder," and he pointed in the direction of Ray Farm, "to gratify your own jealousy and wounded vanity."

"And for what did you marry me?" she asked, sneeringly. "From pure love and compassion, I suppose. Is he dead?" she added, fiercely, looking full into Dennis's stern face. Tell me he is dead, Dennis, and I shall be almost glad you returned."

"What! You love him and are yet glad to hear of his death, Eleanor," said Dennis, gloomily.

"Love him?" she repeated. "Nay, I hate him—hate him even as I never hated your Hilda."

"Hush!" cried Dennis. "Do not dare name her. Do not speak her fair name with your polluted lips."

Eleanor laughed scornfully.

"Her name is on many lips now, Dennis Vanstone. Ah! I hate her. She has been my evil genius all my married life."

Dennis laid his hand roughly on her mouth.

"Silence," he cried, "and listen—I have more to tell you. Gerald is not dead, neither did he breathe a word of your love tale to me. No, he is an honourable man who would scorn a mean action; but let that pass. Do you know why I have come back, Eleanor?" and he took her by the arm again. "You have not answered my question."

"Unless it be to torment me I know not," she replied, "or maybe to claim my money, but that's tied up, you can't touch it. I took care of that."

"It was neither to torment you, nor to rob you I came back," he answered.

And for a moment he looked cautiously round, and then dropping his voice to a whisper, he added:

"I came—to kill you, Eleanor."

She started and would have shrieked, but his iron hand was on her mouth, and half fainting she sank on her knees at his feet.

"Yes," he continued, fiercely and wildly, grasping her firmly by the waist. "I am going to kill you. You shall deceive no one more with your lying tongue. You shall ruin no man's life and hope of salvation again, Eleanor Vanstone. I will rid the earth of a viper like you, and think I do no wrong. Make your peace with Heaven, if you can, for your minutes are numbered."

Dennis! Dennis!" she gasped. "Mercy! Mercy!"

"Mercy!" he echoed. "Had you any mercy on me or on her? Don't talk to me of mercy, Eleanor Merton, there is none in my heart for you. No." And his eyes gleamed with an almost frantic joy. "No. I tell you this moment is the most joyful, the happiest, I have tasted for years—this moment when I am about to kill you."

"Dennis, spare me!" she moaned. "Spare me! I—I repent."

"Repent!" and he laughed again. "Perhaps—perhaps the fiends in hell repent. Who can say?"

She lay moaning and shivering at his feet. Then suddenly she raised her head, for in the distance there came a sound of advancing feet.

But Dennis heard them too, and a look of fierce rage darted across his face. His hand was on her mouth in an instant, and in his raised right hand there glittered a bright blade.

Twice the blade descended, the second time red and dripping. There was one shuddering, sobbing cry and then Dennis was flying from the spot like a madman, and the cold, pale moon shone on the lifeless body of Eleanor Vanstone, and glittered on the handle of a knife, the blade of which lay buried deep in her heart, and lighted up with its silver rays the bloody turf around her.

A cry—a cry full of terror and despair—was borne by the evening breezes to the ears of the flying man, lending yet greater speed to his footsteps—a cry that haunted him strangely in after hours, and recurred to him more visibly than the last sobbing groan of his victim—it was ever sounding in his ears and echoing in his brain. Whose voice had uttered it?

Shri! sharp and terror-stricken it rang through the evening air, and Hilda Ray as she uttered it, and as her eyes fell on the form of the flying man, whom she had believed to be far away, at rest in the deep ocean, fell on her knees almost senseless beside the dead woman.

Dennis—Dennis—a murderer! that was her one thought, and vainly she endeavoured to draw the knife from the body before her, till her white hands were stained and her dress dabbled with the murdered woman's blood. Then her brain seemed to reel.

"Awake! awake!" she cried, "you cannot be dead. Eleanor—Eleanor Vanstone, speak to me!"

And she appeared unaware that her cries had been heard, and that already a crowd of people were assembled around her, that pale, horror-stricken faces were regarding her, and anxious voices asking who had done this thing?

At length a hand was laid on her arm and she looked up to meet the stern, grave eyes of a policeman fixed on hers, and the body of the murdered woman was raised from the ground and placed on a litter, and Hilda, all stained with blood, her face white with terror and despair, was led away by the police amidst the crowd that followed the body to the police-station.

Hundreds of curious, frightened, awe-filled eyes were fixed on her as, all unconscious of the danger of the position in which she was placed and of the terrible suspicion that filled the hearts of all who looked at her, she walked along like one in an awful dream, little realising what had taken place, but absorbed by one horrible idea, one fearful certainty, that Eleanor had been murdered by her husband, by Dennis, and that neither in this world nor the next was any reunion between them possible, that the great gulf between them was wider than ever, wider than it was on the day she had received his cruel letter telling her of his marriage, wider than if oceans had rolled between them, wider far than if she had known him to be sleeping the sleep of death beneath the waters that had swallowed up the good ship in which he had left the shores of England, and from which he had, in some mysterious manner unknown to her, been rescued.

He was a murderer, an outcast for evermore, and yet—in her heart of heart, even with the body of his victim lying pale and bloody before her—she felt she loved him still, and a deep pity for him filled her soul.

No thought or suspicion of what the world was thinking or saying flashed on her pre-occupied mind, no glimmering of an idea that people were already looking on her with horrified glances and setting her down as the murderer of the dead woman!

Yet so it was. She had been found alone with the corpse, her hands and dress stained with blood, and unable or unwilling to answer coherently the questions that had been put to her. The tales that Eleanor had set abroad about her and Dennis had spread far and wide, and it was well known that she and Eleanor were not on friendly terms, and even those who were her friends, and could not but acknowledge that if there were enmity between them Hilda had been terribly wronged and had ample cause to hate the dead woman, could not deny that appearances were terribly against her.

When the news of the murder reached the farm the consternation was unbounded.

"Dead—murdered! and by whom? Miss Hilda found by the body covered with blood! My God! she left the house scarce an hour ago!" cried Margery, horror-stricken. "Where—where is she now?"

"Gone along with the body and the police to the station, ma'am," cried a neighbour, "looking like a dead woman herself."

"To the station—poor dear! and all alone. Give me my bonnet and shawl, I'll go to her. Dear me! 'In the midst of life we are in death,' as the parson said only last Sunday, and it's true—true, like all else in the Book! Mrs. Vanstone murdered! Who would ever have thought of such a thing? And why does Miss Hilda stay away along with the people? What good can she do, poor dear, down there? I'll go and fetch her home at once. Dear, dear!—first the husband, then the wife! Who'll go next, I wonder?"

And the old lady hurried off, accompanied by Harry, the gardener, and a crowd of neighbours whom the terrible news had drawn from their cottages, eager to learn particulars of the crime and view the corpse of the murdered woman.

Who had done it? That was the one all-absorbing question.

"She had many enemies, had Mrs. Vanstone," said Margery, as she hurried along; "but I did not think, proud and haughty as she was, that there was one in Hartford who would have taken her life, poor soul! It's well Mr. Dennis was spared this, and the old lady, Mrs. Merton. My! what a crowd there be for sure! What can Miss Hilda be doing amongst such a set?"

And with the aid of Harry and some of the farm servants she managed to push her way into the crowded station, looking round on all sides for Hilda, and at first in vain, for the crowd was thick; when, however, she was recognised as the housekeeper from the farm the people gave way.

"Stand back, stand back," they whispered, "and let her pass. She may know something; she may be able to say something; let her pass, it is Mrs. Margery, the housekeeper; she may be able to speak for Miss Ray."

Speak for Miss Ray! What did they mean? What had Miss Hilda to do with it? And she pressed forward anxiously through the parting crowd.

Standing in the midst was Hilda with her blood-stained robe and white, terror-stricken face, and beside her stood a policeman, who, laying his hand on her shoulder, said, in an almost faltering voice:

"Miss Ray, I arrest you for the murder of Mrs. Vanstone."

A deep, sighing groan broke from the crowd, and Hilda, as if the words of the man had roused her from a terrible trance, looked once wildly round on the crowd of horrified faces, and catching a glimpse of Margery stretched out her arms imploringly towards her, and with one wild cry sank senseless beside the corpse of Eleanor Vanstone.

CHAPTER XVII.

And if thou tell'st the weary story right,
Upon my soul the hearers will shed tears.

THAT night there was little sleep taken by the people of Hartford. Men stood talking in the streets in anxious groups, and women and children assembled in knots around the cottage doors, talking over the terrible occurrence of the day with awe-struck faces and bated breath.

Murder was an almost unknown crime amidst the peaceful population in and around Hartford, and the deed that had been committed struck a strange terror into the hearts of all.

Mrs. Vanstone murdered not a mile from her own door, and by whom? For in spite of Hilda's arrest not one of the honest villagers who had known her from a child, and had her daily amongst them and admired and revered her, and looked up to her as to a superior being, knowing how good and just and charitable she was, could believe for a moment the charge against her.

"It's some mistake—some dreadful mistake," gabbled Dame Halsworthy. "She, who wouldn't harm a fly, who was as tender-hearted and as kind as could be, and would give her last farthing to those in want, would she take another's life? Don't tell me, for I would never believe it. No, not if all the magistrates and judges and juries in the land took their oath to it. Angry! Done in a fit of anger!" she continued, in answer to the remark of a comparative stranger who put in a word. "You don't know Miss Hilda. Who's ever seen her angry? She's as meek and mild as a lamb, I tell ye, and never had the heart to say so much as a cross word to a soul. Often I've said to her, and Mrs. Margery knows it, 'Miss Hilda, I've said, 'you spoil your folk, you should be harder on them, they take advantage of you.' And she's made answer, 'Never mind, Nurse Halsworthy, they do well enough. I like to see folks happy. We all have our faults, you know.' And when Tom Heath was caught with a brace of partridges and a hare on her land there she'd not prosecute him, not she, for said she 'He's got a sick wife and five little ones at home. What would they do if he went to jail?' And you tell me she's one who would stain her hands with another's blood."

A dissentient murmur rose from the crowd who listened attentively to Mrs. Halsworthy's speech broken as it was by sobs, and many an eye was filled with tears as she went on:

"Mrs. Vanstone wronged her, I know, took her husband that was to be—his who's dead and gone now from her—but did she ever show her any ill-will for that? Not she. I know, though maybe I ought not to tell, but this drags it from me, how she offered to give up half her fortune to him and her when they were sold up. That does not look like ill-feeling, ay?"

"Nay, nay," and "Not a bit of it," murmured the villagers.

And as the moon set and the first chill morning breeze began to stir the leaves of the trees the crowd dispersed and entered their various dwellings, to assemble again later on in the day at the coroner's inquest, and learn from various witnesses the full story of what had taken place the evening before. In a dull, bare-looking room, with benches and tables at one end, sat the coroner and the twelve good men and true, called upon to act as jury. Grave and anxious they all looked, for Miss Ray was well known to them, and they felt their position to be more than usually difficult.

The coroner, a grey-haired man with an intelligent face and kind-looking eyes, had known her for years, and each jurymen had in some way had something to do with Ray Farm and the Ray family at different times of their lives, and they felt the task before them to be no easy one.

As many visitors, eager and curious, as the room could hold were assembled, and in the midst, still clad in her blood-stained garments, stood Hilda, pale and white, but perfectly calm and collected; and looking at her as she stood there, the picture of purity and innocence, not one in the room but felt that the crime laid to her charge could never have been committed by her, that she was guiltless of it.

Many witnesses were examined. It was shown that Eleanor Vanstone left her house about an hour before sunset, and was seen by various people to walk slowly in the direction of the moor alone.

Hilda was shown to have left the farm an hour or so later and to have walked through the village, then on to the plantation, and through it, also alone. Mrs. Margery had seen her leave the house, and Miss Ray had told her she would be back by tea-time.

"Had Miss Ray been lately in company with Mrs. Vanstone?"

"No. Miss Ray rarely if ever visited her."

"Did she know of Mr. Vanstone's death?"

"Yes; and had been terribly shocked at it."

"Had she seen Mrs. Vanstone since?"

"No; she had been to the cottage, but Mrs. Vanstone had declined to see her."

"Had she gone out with the intention of following or meeting Mrs. Vanstone?"

"How was Miss Ray to know that Mrs. Vanstone was out? No; she had only gone out for a walk."

The next witness who was called deposed to hearing footsteps passing his cottage, and on looking out seeing Miss Ray walking quickly towards the gate of the plantation. He and another strolled in the same direction, and in a few minutes after heard a terrible scream, and running in the direction of the cry found Miss Ray on her knees beside the corpse of Mrs. Vanstone.

"Did they hear voices—anyone talking?"

"No; they heard naught but the cry. They called for help, and several others came up. The police were fetched, and the body taken away."

The policeman who had been called next deposed to following the last witness to the spot where Mrs. Vanstone's body was lying and finding Miss Ray beside it in a state of terrible agitation and terror, to her calling on the dead woman to awake, to speak to her, to rouse herself, and to her being too much overcome by her feelings to be able to answer the questions put to her.

"Did Miss Ray object to follow the corpse to the station-house?"

"No; she came away quietly enough; seemed stunned and said nothing, only kept wringing her hands and sobbing."

The medical testimony was then adduced. There was a murmur through the court and whispers of an astounding revelation that was to be made as the doctor began his evidence.

The causes of death were plain enough—two deep stabs, either sufficient to destroy life; one penetrating the heart, in which the blade of a knife, a long, sharp, peculiarly-formed blade, was found still embedded. The blade had been broken short off at the hilt.

An inquiry was made as to whether the hilt had been recovered, and, in reply, the inspector of police stated that search was even now being made for it.

The medical evidence was continued.

"Would there have been time for the murdered person to scream, or would death have been too instantaneous?"

"The first blow would not have caused instant death, and between it and the dealing of the second blow the victim might—would, in all human probability—have uttered a cry," was the reply.

"Could the wounds have been self-inflicted?"

"No." In the witness's opinion the blows must have been given by another hand.

At this moment there was a stir amongst the crowd. The policeman who had gone in search of the missing knife hilt were seen returning in haste, and in a moment more it was laid on the table before the coroner.

It fitted the broken blade exactly, and bore the marks of four bloody fingers on it.

For a moment silence reigned in court, and then the coroner's face turned pale. He held the blood-stained hilt carefully to the light, and on the small silver plate, at the extremity, he saw the letters "H. R." engraved.

The hilt fell heavily from his hand on to the table, and an expression of the deepest sorrow filled his countenance.

Slowly the blade and the hilt to which it belonged were passed round to each jurymen, from hand to hand, and as Hilda's eyes fell on it a look of utter horror and despair—of nameless dread—came into her face. Then it grew calm again, and the examination continued.

"Where was the hilt found?"

"In a tuft of grass, scarce a foot from where the corpse lay last night," was the reply.

Witnesses were now called who identified the knife as one which Hilda had in her possession for many months and used almost daily in the garden. It was one she set great store by, and would never allow anyone to use beside herself.

"Had she been seen to use it lately?"

And both Margery and Harry were obliged to allow, the former with tears rolling down her cheeks, and the latter in an almost inaudible voice, that they had seen it in Miss Ray's hand not a fortnight since.

"It were lying in the garden with her hat and basket last time I set eyes on it," sobbed Margery. "Someone must have stolen it. Oh! gentlemen, ye cannot think my sweet young lady would commit such a bloody deed as this?"

"Where were the hat and basket now?—who had brought it in from the garden?" was the next question asked.

"Miss Ray herself," was the reply. "She brought it in the very day—yes, the very morning—poor Mr. Dennis—Mr. Vanstone—left Hartford."

There were a few more witnesses examined, but little fresh evidence was elicited, and that little was not in Hilda's favour, for it went to establish the fact that there had been an ill-feeling between her and Mrs. Vanstone, and the mischievous, spiteful stories that the dead woman had circulated were repeated and the scene at Stonevale gate recounted by one who had witnessed it, and it was sufficient to impress the jury with an idea that Eleanor and Hilda had been deadly enemies, during the last few weeks at any rate of the murdered woman's life.

When asked if she wished to make a statement Hilda paused and for a moment hesitated,

and her face flushed from pale to rosy red and then faded away again to a deadly pallor.

"Nothing," she replied. "I have nothing to say, except that I am innocent of this crime," and she raised her hands and eyes to Heaven. "Innocent! as God is my witness."

There was a deep silence for a moment and the jury retired to deliberate, and Hilda was led into an adjoining room whilst they were absent to wait till her fate was decided on.

How long the moments seemed! How wearily the time dragged on as she sat half unconscious waiting to be taken back before her judges! She had little doubt what their decision would be, but at present she hardly realised what the consequences of it would prove. She was still too stunned by the suddenness of the blow that had fallen to take in all her situation clearly and the terrible future that was probably in store for her. Only one firm resolve filled her heart—she would utter no word to criminate Dennis. She would die for him if need be.

At length the door opened and she was led again into the adjoining room. The crowd stood round in awe-struck silence as the coroner rose and asked the foreman of the jury for their verdict.

"We find the prisoner guilty of the murder of Eleanor Vanstone," he replied, in a low, faltering tone, and turned away his head.

And the coroner, with scarcely less emotion, committed Hilda Ray to take her trial for wilful murder at the next sessions.

There was one loud, heartbroken cry as the verdict was spoken, and Margery was carried senseless from the room, and Hilda cast one sad, yearning glance at her as she was carried out; then, without changing a muscle of her countenance, left the court, accompanied by the police, and before evening she was an inmate of Yarborough jail.

What a terrible journey it was to her! Margery's piercing cry had roused her, woke her from the dull lethargy of horror into which she had till then been plunged. The crowd of upturned faces and gazing eyes fixed on her with various expressions, horror, pity, dislike, sorrow, aversion, sent a cold, shuddering thrill through her soul; their observations as she passed, some of surprise and contempt, and some of doubtful pity, fell on her ear and burnt deep into her heart.

The dreadful tale, which at first all men had disbelieved, had now grown far from incredible. She saw that many a one who but a short time before believed her to be all purity and goodness now regarded her as a lost being stained with the blackest crime it is in man's nature to commit, stained with the blood of a fellow creature, and bearing the brand of Cain on her brow.

How she shrank from the fixed gaze and hard, unsympathising stare of the bystanders and shuddered at their words, and sank into a corner of the police-van and hid her face as she was driven rapidly away to the neighbouring town!

Had she left Hartford for ever? Would she never behold her home and friends again? Was there no way out of this terrible difficulty, no return to life for her?

And then the figure of Dennis flying terror-stricken from the scene of his crime rose before her. No; either he or she must die. Better she should die for him innocent as she was than that he should perish with such a sin on his soul to sink him to the nethermost hell.

No. She would die for him, and he should live and repent of his sin, and be saved at the last.

And as these thoughts passed through her mind she became calmer, and strange, sad, sweet visions of other days when she and Dennis had been happy together, and Daniel Ray was yet alive, and for awhile she lost the consciousness of what was going on around her, and seemed to be living but in the past, forgetful of the terrible present and unthinking of the still more terrible future, till the jolting, swaying carriage in which she was making the journey drew up at the gates of the county jail, and with a start she awoke to the stern reality of her posi-



[VENGEANCE.]

tion, and the sweet dreams of other days fled away.

To describe the misery of Margery and the other inhabitants of the Farm would be impossible. Their mistress, so young, so good, and so beautiful, torn from them and imprisoned on such a charge! It was past all belief.

"The fools—the deluded idiots!" cried the old lady, distractedly. "Oh, my lamb, my blessed lamb, what a fate for you!"

"It was all that knife. What villain could have stolen it? for stolen sure enough it has been, and that has worked Miss Hilda's ruin. Who'll look after her now in her prison cell?" replied the sobbing Nurse Halsworthy. "Oh, if Master Dennis could but see what his jealous folly has led to at last! But Heaven's been more merciful to him than he deserves, and has taken him from the evil to come."

As they talked and wept together the sound of horses' feet and carriage wheels roused them from their grief, and in a moment more the carriage drew up, out of which stepped Mr. Jenkins, the lawyer, and Colonel Morgan, a neighbouring magistrate.

"Oh, sir, sir," cried Margery, "if you had only been here this morning my young lady would never have been treated so! Oh, sir, help her! Fancy my tender, beautiful Miss Hilda in a jail!"

Mr. Jenkins groaned, and the colonel turned aside to hide his grief.

"It's a terrible, horrible thing, as you say, Mrs. Margery, but I fear my presence or absence would have made no difference; but we must all do our best to help Miss Hilda, dame, and—"

"Help her! Heaven bless you, sir, I'd gladly die to save her. You know it, sir. What can I do? Tell me, and I'll do it," she interrupted, eagerly.

"Calm yourself, calm yourself, my good woman," cried the colonel, and at the moment he spoke another carriage drew up at the door. "Ah, here is Mr. Leonard—a famous lawyer, dame. Now you must answer all his questions,

and tell him all you know about the matter, and he'll do his best for your young lady at the trial. Don't be downhearted, my good soul," he continued, kindly, as the old woman sobbed afresh. "We know there must be some mistake somewhere, and, with Heaven's help, we'll find it out, and find the real murderer too, for, depend, he's not far off, if we could only put our hand on him."

"Heaven be praised, sir! With God's help we will," replied Mrs. Margery, solemnly.

And then Mr. Leonard, the great lawyer, entered, and, seating himself, began to ask Margery a number of questions.

"Your young mistress knew Mrs. Vanstone well—were they friends?" he asked, looking at her attentively.

"Neither friends nor foes, sir, except in as much as my young mistress was good to all—even to her," she replied.

"Even to her! Why do you say that? Had Mrs. Vanstone wronged her then?" he asked.

"Wronged her?" cried the woman, eagerly. "Don't you know, sir?" And then she poured forth the tale of Hilda's broken-off marriage and spoiled life. "That were injury enough, sir, but not content with such wickedness—God forgive me that I speak ill of her, and she goes to give an account of herself to Him—she spread evil, lying tales of Miss Hilda in the village, and—"

"Had Miss Ray heard them?" he asked. "Nay, how can I tell? I believe not. We all loved her too well to repeat to her what we knew would grieve her. No, I don't believe she knew it, sir."

"And this knife, Mrs. Margery—did Miss Hilda carry it about with her often?" he inquired.

"Yes," replied the old lady, hesitatingly; "yes, sir, mostly. She valued it, poor dear, for it was Mr. Vanstone's gift to her long ago, when they were engaged, sir, and for his sake she valued it."

"Just so," replied the lawyer, nodding.

"Now can you tell me exactly the hour your mistress left the house?"

"Yes; five o'clock exactly," she answered. "And she had the knife with her?" he said.

"Nay, sir, I don't believe it. Miss Ray only used it for gardening purposes. I don't believe she would have taken it out with her on the moor. It was at home for gardening work and for the like she used it."

The lawyer paused and considered, then called Dame Halsworthy and the other servants and questioned them all searchingly on the events of the past few days, often asking them about occurrences and conversations that appeared to their inexperienced minds so foreign to the subject in hand that they grew bewildered and almost indignant, and then by some subtle turn showing them how their answers were brought to bear on the question before them, and then, in company with Mr. Jenkins and Colonel Morgan, he went over the house and grounds, noted the spot where Hilda's hat and garden-basket, with the knife beside it, had lain the last time Harry had seen them on the terrace, walked through the orchard, on to the village, and through the plantation, taking just the same path she had followed on the evening of the murder, out on to the moor to the spot where Eleanor Vanstone had met her death.

Then he paused and looked around carefully, and then, turning to Mr. Jenkins, said:

"We must put the case at once into the hands of a skilful detective. I am very sorry for my client; things look terribly against her. It will go hard with her, I fear; the circumstantial evidence is strong. I've known many a man hanged on less. But we have time before us. I'll send a detective down at once to do his best for us."

And then they turned sorrowfully away, and, followed by a knot of weeping servants, returned to their carriages, and Ray Farm was soon left far behind them.

(To be Continued.)



[NEIGHBOURS.]

A JACKET WITH SILVER BUTTONS.

A NOVELETTE.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

CHAPTER I.

SYCAMORE GROVE.

"Oh, Charlie, it's perfectly lovely!"

And I, a four weeks' wife, clapped my hands like any foolish school-girl, to Charley's amusement, and somewhat to his annoyance also, I think, for was not our solitary domestic standing at the door to welcome us in all the glory of a clean print dress and smart cap, and with wide-open eyes that certainly expressed some astonishment at the erratic behaviour of "the missis?"

"Sycamore Grove" was a queer little place, part of a rural village once, now in a busy suburb of London, and looking as quaint and old world in its seclusion as if the tide of improvement and progress which has rolled over the great city had never come within many miles of its old trees and funny-shaped houses.

Something in the lease of the ground on which it stood prevented the whole place from being swept away to make room for modern houses with street frontages and many stories, which would bring in ten times the money that the tiny villas and cottages each in its own garden did.

The little tenements were somewhat dilapidated now, and the gardens rather wild and lacking in the distressing primness which is such a characteristic of all suburban plots of ground. But I liked the place all the better for these tokens of neglect, and chose to think I should be able to fancy myself in the country

once more as I gazed out of our little drawing-room window into a veritable garden, where some flowers at any rate would grow, and where two or three tall trees waved unhurt as yet by their proximity to London smoke and smells.

We were very poor, Charlie and I; at least most people would have thought us so. He had two hundred and fifty pounds a year, and held a position of trust in a house of business where he had been from a boy, and I had nothing. I was a poor governess when we first met, and came to him with nothing but the wardrobe I had managed to get together, a little house linen, and the will to work and help him all I could.

We had had many a consultation as to where we should pitch our tent before we finally decided on the rural seclusion of the Grove. To live in town was not to be thought of. House rent was so high, and to share a place with anyone else was against all our notions of comfort.

"Married people should always be alone, my darling," Charlie said, with all the wisdom of years of experience, and though I laughed at him then I agreed with him as I always did.

I did not want anyone else to have part in this my first attempt at housekeeping. So we went to see the Grove, and decided that we might venture on one of the houses and have a servant.

The rents were low and the taxes too; the houses were too small for people with families, and those who could afford cottages ornées and gardens went to a more aristocratic region for their homes.

Sycamore Grove was not aristocratic. It was too near town, and the fare there was so ridiculously cheap that people of very limited means indeed managed to afford to live there. I had seen the place when it was taken, but I had not been allowed to see it while it was in process of furnishing, and I was astonished to find what a hundred pounds would do.

Charley had saved that much and spent it on our home, and there surely never was such a cosy little nest as he and his mother had made for his penniless bride. They were all so good

to me—Charley's friends. They thought far more of me than I deserved, and made much of me till I was the happiest bride that ever gave away "her hand with her heart in it."

We had calculated our expenses to a fraction, and knew what we could afford and what we could not, and I was the proudest of women when I went over my new possessions with my little servant at my heels and began to realise what being the mistress of a house meant.

The garden would not give us much but the pleasure of having it to sit in in the hot summer weather. But Charlie declared that did not matter, for every cabbage raised in a London garden cost about six times as much as if it were bought at the nearest green-grocer's, to say nothing of the trouble and dirt which kitchen gardening entailed.

One thing I made up my mind to have—fowls. I was very fond of poultry, and where I had lived for many years I had been allowed to superintend the poultry, and my pupil's mother was pleased to say that my management made her fowls profitable, so Charley humoured this, my one whim, and engaged a cunning man, who did everything to make me a house and a run in a quiet corner of the garden out of sight of the windows, where I could rear chickens and pet particular old hens to my heart's content.

He laughed at me and declared that the eggs would cost sixpence each at the very least, but I think he was satisfied to the contrary when I proved to him, not in theory, but in practice, that my feathered colony was not expensive, inasmuch as they ate up everything that would be otherwise thrown away, and laid as well-conducted hens ought to do, and never a soft egg amongst the whole batch.

"I stand corrected, little woman," he said to me, when I had watched him eat two eggs with a relish. "If your accounts are correct the eggs are cheap as well as nice, and they are different from the musty abominations that shop people declare are new laid; but there's one thing you'll have to modify about that farmyard of yours."

"What is that?"

"The transports of your old rooster when any event of importance happens in his barem. The neighbours can't sleep for him; he is such an unconsciously early riser."

"I am afraid he is a nuisance," I said, somewhat ruefully. "I believe he'd crow if I buried him. What shall we do?"

"Nothing. It was only Mr. Dalrymple that said his wife was unwell and nervous, and the crowing startled her."

"And who is Mr. Dalrymple?" I asked, for I had made no one's acquaintance as yet, being far too busy with my own important affairs to heed those of my neighbours.

"He lives next door, at No. 30."

Our cottage was No. 19, and I had never seen anyone in the garden of No. 30 as yet. I had a vague idea that the house was empty.

"He hasn't lived there long, surely," I said.

I felt quite an old resident now. I had been in Sycamore Grove full three months when this conversation took place.

"No; they only came the day before yesterday. They seem very nice sort of people."

I have written a great deal about my hen roost; I see, but it was all through my love for poultry that things came about as they did. It was a white hen with a black crest that—But I will not anticipate; I must tell things as they happened, or I shall never get on at all.

I was glad to think someone had come to No. 30, for our house was at the corner of a square, as it were, and there was no one on the other side of us; and when Charlie came in late, as sometimes happened, I did not like having nothing but a great vacant piece of land. "To be let for building purposes" outside of our door and no one to speak to if anything happened to me or my small maid, who was nervous and superstitious to a degree, and had a faculty for seeing men in all sorts of impossible places, and declaring they were there for unlawful purposes.

I didn't know who had had the ordering of the numbers of the Grove, but they went round the estate anyhow. No. 16 was at the further end and 21 was over the way. Mr. Dalrymple's house was, I think, the prettiest in the Grove. It was a trifle larger than ours, and had a better garden with a sycamore tree in it that I think must have given the name to the whole place. I don't know why I felt curious about the couple who lived there, but I did. They lived a quiet, unpretending sort of life and seemed to have no visitors.

I set them down for people of means, for very nice furniture made its appearance only the day after Charley had spoken to me about the old rooster crowing, and a gardener came and did up the garden till I felt quite envious of the wealth that could afford such scientific handwork. Still some days passed away and I saw nothing of either Mr. or Mrs. Dalrymple. They were there, the charwoman who had been engaged to clean the place told my Mary so, and she came to me open-mouthed with the news. She had so much to say that I could not help listening to her, though I was rather ashamed of myself for taking an interest in the gossip of a servant. I was just the least bit lonely, so perhaps I may be pardoned. I knew no one as yet, and Charlie had to be away so much, so I heard all that Mary had to say about Mr. Dalrymple and his wife.

"I don't think much of him, ma'am," Mary said; and I laughed at the notion of her being in any way efficient as a judge. "He's handsome enough and all that, and he spoke civil when I picked up a book as dropped out of his pocket; but he ain't a gentleman."

"What makes you think that, Mary?" I asked.

"He can't look you in the face, ma'am," was the girl's ready answer. "The minute he thought I was looking at him he dropped his eyes like and seemed as if he was on thorns."

"You are a most original young person, Mary," I said. "No one likes to be stared at."

"I didn't stare, ma'am," Mary replied, promptly. "He's a man as can't stand a good look, but Mrs. Dalrymple—she's just lovely!"

"Is she?" I asked, somewhat listlessly, wondering what Mary might consider true loveliness to be.

"Yes, ma'am; she's tall and a lovely figure. She had a tight-fitting jacket on and a turned-up hat and—"

"And that was the beauty, I suppose, Mary?"

"No, ma'am, it's her face—it's like an angel's."

"Indeed, and what is that like?"

"Fair, ma'am, with a skin like satin and big eyes and long, dark lashes; but her hair's gold, and such a lot of it!—and a sweet colour in her cheeks."

"That will do, Mary," I said, feeling in my own heart that Mary had been describing a very equivocal sort of person, and resolving to have as little as might be to do with my neighbours. I told Charlie when he came and he laughed at me.

"That's Mary's idea," he said. "Mrs. Dalrymple is as beautiful a woman as ever stepped and a perfect lady—at least, I think so. She is all the girl says, but she is not what such a description implies."

"What are they?"

"I don't know, but I have gathered the notion from somewhere that he has something to do with dealers in bric-à-brac. I may be altogether wrong or have dreamed it, but I have got hold of the idea somehow."

It was some time before I saw Mrs. Dalrymple. I had the felicity of seeing her husband one day in the garden. Some repairs necessary to their premises had made a breach in the wall, which belonged to both houses jointly, and the gentleman spoke to Charlie as he was gardening about it. I was there and, of course, was introduced to him, and the aptness of Mary's description struck me at once. He was not a gentleman. He was most courteous and agreeable, but there was the nameless something wanting that no teaching will give, and he did not look anyone straight in the face as a thorough-bred man would have done. The fact made talking to him unpleasant.

He spoke of his wife and said she was not very well. She was somewhat delicate, but he hoped she would have the pleasure of making my acquaintance soon, and he finished his speech by handing me over the wall a bunch of splendid roses. Nothing like them could be grown in our district, and he explained that he had been to the Rose Show at the Crystal Palace in such a manner that I gathered he belonged to the press and had been there on business.

I came to be quite sure that he had something to do with newspapers before I had known him long, but I never could conquer the repugnance with which he inspired me. It was different with his wife. I don't think anyone could have known her and not loved her. She was simply the most loveable woman I ever met in my life.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. DALRYMPLE.

MRS. DALRYMPLE was either remarkably shy or wonderfully exclusive, for I had known her husband some time to speak to, and Charlie had fraternised with him over the garden wall a good many times before I ever caught a glimpse of his wife—I mean of her face. I had seen her go out more than once, but always so closely veiled that I could not get a notion of what her face could be like.

I could see that she was tall and elegantly formed as Mary had said, and she was always very richly dressed, though what she wore was always made very plainly and composed of the quietest colours. She looked like a duchess in disguise and somehow out of place in the tiny house in Sycamore Gardens.

I could fancy just such a figure sweeping through the drawing-rooms of some West End mansion or heading the table at some noble country house. I could not fancy her walking the streets of a London suburb. I wove a wonderful romance about her from the first moment of

seeing her, at which Charley laughed till I thought him very unkind and unsympathising.

"You will find your swan a very ordinary goose, I expect," he said, when Mrs. Dalrymple had passed the window one evening, veiled as usual, on her husband's arm. "She is certainly a fine woman and well dressed, but she may be as ugly as a gorgon and with nothing of the lady about her for aught you know."

"Mary says she is lovely," I retorted.

"I don't think much of Mary's taste," Charley said, with a laugh. "I heard her call the butcher's wife 'an handsome lady' the other day. After that I should expect to hear her call the old Irishwoman who comes with water-cresses and makes such an infernal row just when I want a nap a beauty."

"I know Mrs. Dalrymple is lovely," I said, positively, "and she is graceful to a degree; you can't deny that, sir."

But Charley was in a mood to deny everything, and declared that she walked well enough, but that she might be as awkward a woman as ever stepped indoors for all that.

"She isn't, I am sure of it," I said, warmly, "and she dresses beautifully."

"Ah, if you are going to take the ground of female dress," he said, wickedly, with a twinkle in his eyes, "I have done. I don't know anything about it."

"I do; I know what it costs," I replied, with a little sigh, for I remembered how far I had to make a little money go when I wanted a nice trousseau. "She must have a fortune to wear jackets like the one she had on the other day—the loveliest silk, Charley, and such trimming. It must have cost ten guineas at least without the buttons."

"And what might they cost? I fancy I have yet to learn what amount a lady can put on her back."

"As much more, I should say. They are real silver, Charley, and such large ones."

It was in the days when very large buttons were fashionable, and Mrs. Dalrymple was by no means particular, though hers were as large as any I have seen, and reported to be solid silver.

Charley denied the fact of their solidity, and called me a goose for believing all the tales that Mary brought in about my neighbour. But I had happened to hear of the buttons from some other gossip that came my way, and found that their beauty and stylishness had attracted a good deal of attention. I came to know their value in the time that was coming.

The autumn was beginning to close in before I saw my beautiful neighbour face to face. I had been ill for a week, and had not been out of doors, and I was enjoying the soft evening air in our own garden, when the voice of Mr. Dalrymple, a singularly unsympathetic one by the bye, said:

"Good evening, Mrs. Briskine."

I looked up and returned his greeting, and saw by his side the loveliest woman I had ever seen. A tall, graceful creature with red-gold hair drawn back from her face, and a complexion so transparently lovely that I have never seen it equalled in the flesh or on canvas.

She was simply dressed in a long, clinging blue dress, which hung in artistic folds about her and was drawn in at the waist with a girdle of dead gold.

On her bosom was a great bunch of yellow roses, the very last colour that I should have imagined becoming to a woman of her complexion, but which only seemed to enhance her bewitching beauty.

There was a look of sadness, as it seemed to me, in her mobile face, a shrinking from observation that was almost like fear, and it struck me too that she would rather not have been introduced to me.

I don't know why I fancied that the few words her husband whispered to her were rough, but I did fancy it. He seemed to say: "Don't be a fool." And she came forward like a rebuked child and held out her hand over the low wall.

"I am glad to make your acquaintance," she

said, and her voice was as sweet as her face. "I hope you are better."

"I am quite well, I think," I returned, staring at her more than good breeding warranted perhaps in my astonishment and admiration. "Charley, my husband I mean, says he believes I have only been lazy because I like being waited on."

I was leaning on the wall as I spoke, and I sent a loving look to where Charley stood talking to Mr. Dalrymple, who seemed to me to be watching his wife while he was speaking to my husband.

I was so glad now that we had not had that bit of low wall made higher, as we intended to do when we first went to see Sycamore Grove. Somehow it had been put off, and I was glad of it now. I thought I should like gossiping with this beautiful woman over our mutual fence.

"Your husband is very fond of you," she said, in a half inquiring voice, more as if the question were part of her thoughts than anything meant to be uttered.

"Yes, we love each other very dearly."

"Your looks tell me that," she went on, with a laugh. "You are talking to me and thinking of him."

"I am very rude then," I replied, recalling myself, for I really was thinking of Charley.

I was wondering whether he would mind me making a friend of Mrs. Dalrymple. He had shown unmistakable dislike to the sort of women who drop into tea at all sorts of uncomfortable times, and expect the run of one's house when the acquaintance they have forced on one isn't a week old.

"I hope we shall be friends," I said, impulsively. "I have so few friends."

"And I have none," she said, with an unutterable ring of pathos in her voice. "Not one in all the world."

"Oh, dear, how sad," I replied. "It sounds so desolate."

"It is desolate, but it is true."

"I hope you have asked Mrs. Erskine to come in and have a chat with you sometimes," said Mr. Dalrymple, coming up as she spoke and giving her a fierce, meaning look. "You two ladies, both strangers, ought to be good friends. There aren't many I care for my wife to be acquainted with."

There was something horribly offensive in his manner, a repulsive ring in his voice, and I hardly knew how to answer him civilly; but a look in his wife's eyes made me do so. I just caught the expression with which she listened to him, and it was one of abject terror.

"I hope Mrs. Erskine will honour us so far," she said, in her low, sweet tones, and there was an appealing expression on her face as she said the words that would have made me say yes to anything.

"We shall be very happy to come in sometimes," I said, and that was how my intimacy with Mrs. Dalrymple began.

For I was very intimate with her after a very little while, and used to talk to her about Charley and what he did and all sorts of things without noticing that she never gave me any confidence in return. I thought I knew all about Mr. Dalrymple. Charley and I had settled it in our minds that he belonged to the press and was engaged on a daily paper, for he went out almost every night and came home in the early morning.

Once we were told that wherever he went it was in a pony trap, for our milkman was certain that he met him some distance from the Grove driving a small trap. I told Mrs. Dalrymple, but she said the man must have been mistaken. Her husband was obliged to be in town by a certain time every evening, and always went by rail.

"He is a newspaper editor, isn't he?" I asked. "It must be very disagreeable for you to have him out at such an uncanny time of night."

"Yes, it's very disagreeable," she replied, her colour coming and going with startling rapidity, but it was a way her face had. She would turn pale on the slightest provocation, and then red again, as if she were ashamed of herself. "It's more than disagreeable, it is maddening. I sit

here thinking, what if anything is happening to him, if—"

She broke off suddenly, and I wondered what made her so nervous—doubtless being left in the house with only the servant—yet she did not give me the idea of a nervous woman at all.

"I don't think of that when Charley is away," I said; "but then his business is all in the day. I don't have to lie awake at night listening for him."

"No, that's just it," she said, in an excited tone. "Waiting and listening with your heart in your mouth for every sound there's no wonder I am ill sometimes."

"Not if you take it like that," I said; "but Mr. Dalrymple always does come home safe, does he not?"

"So far he has, but he may not—he may not."

I was puzzled and turned the conversation to some pretty trifles that were lying about the room, and then she told me that her husband was somewhat of a connoisseur in such things and a dealer also in a small way, and she took me over the house, all but one room, and let me see many curious and pretty things that Mr. Dalrymple had picked up at various times.

Especially she showed me the jacket I had admired so much and the silver buttons thereon. They had belonged to some half-civilised princess or other, and were a marvel of the silversmith's art. They were very light, not solid, and were exquisitely carved and worth a great deal from their unique beauty.

"I would show you all there is in there," she said, as we passed the door of what was my bedroom in my own house, "but Mortimer always takes the key with him. He says I should do more harm to his treasures in a minute than he could undo in a week if he let me loose among them. He rides his hobby to death, you see, like most men when they set one up."

I went home that evening the richer for a very pretty flaggee chain, of no special value except that the gift showed Mrs. Dalrymple's good feeling towards me. Charley said I ought not to have accepted it, but it was given in such a manner that I could not well refuse, and was, as I have said, of no intrinsic value.

Mr. Dalrymple went away to France soon after that evening, and his wife seemed more nervous and depressed than I had ever seen her. She seemed to shrink from me too, I thought, but that must have been fancy; she said it was when I told her of my feelings. She had never known anyone that she clung to like me, she said, and indeed I think she was sincere.

I asked her one day what made her so sad, and she said "My blighted life." I supposed Mr. Dalrymple was not kind to her, and pitied her without asking her any questions.

While her husband was away Charley had a great worry. There was a robbery at the house of business where he was employed, of such a character that it could only have been perpetrated by someone who was well acquainted with the premises. It was a terrible affair, and the firm offered large rewards and did everything that could be done to find the thieves, but to no purpose.

Charley worried himself sadly about it, though it was in a part of the premises with which he had nothing to do in any way, and the stolen money was none that would have ever passed through his hands in any way. It made a tremendous stir, and the papers were full of it, but the thieves were never taken.

CHAPTER III.

DOUBTS AND FEARS.

The great city robbery was long talked of, and all the newspapers made harvest out of it, and the unlucky people who were being constantly taken up on suspicion of having part in it. It made Charley quite ill, for though he had nothing whatever to do with the department in

which it took place he felt a good deal of responsibility, and was vexed and disappointed that no trace whatever could be found of the thieves.

The police were stormed at by the press and censured by the public because they could do nothing, but as far as I could see they did all that could be done. The matter had been so cleverly managed, and their knowledge of the premises so perfect, that the housekeeper had never been awakened, and earned for herself a very undesirable notoriety by her entire ignorance of all that went forward on that eventful night.

She herself always declared that by some means or other she had been drugged, for that both herself and her niece, who lived with her and helped her, slept with unusual soundness and felt uncomfortable and dazed the next morning. No one had touched her beer, or anything belonging to her that she knew of.

The girl said that when she went to the usual public-house for their supper beer a man took up her can in a mistake, but put it down again in a moment, begging her pardon. There was no reason to suppose that he had put anything into the beer; indeed, there was not time for anything of the sort, she declared.

She was questioned about it, but she could not remember the man, she said; she had never seen him before to her knowledge. He had a can of beer of his own; he had only touched hers by mistake. She should not have thought any more of the circumstance but for her aunt and herself both feeling so strangely the morning after it happened.

I thought there might be some truth in what the girl said, but Charlie said it was nonsense. The man at the public-house remembered the circumstance and told him that it all happened in a minute. The man only lifted the can, and then found he had made a mistake. His beer was in a jug which he had brought with him.

In the midst of all the excitement about it Mr. Dalrymple came home from Paris, and was much interested in hearing all about it. But there was a curious tone in his way of speaking about it that made me feel as if he sympathised more with the thieves that had got so cleverly off with the booty than with the losers of the property.

"It was so clever," he said—"such a neat thing;" and I think I disliked him more than ever after hearing him speak of it. He talked quite as if he knew exactly how burglars set about their business.

"I've had to get up in lots of things," he said, seeing my look of surprise when he was talking in his strange way about robberies in general, and the one at Charley's place in particular. "A newspaper man has to know most things you see, Mrs. Erskine, and I know this, if people would only keep a little terrier dog with plenty of pluck and a sharp nose and let him loose at night there wouldn't be half the burglaries that there are. The little brutes are as slippery as eels; there's no catching them, and they will rouse a house in no time, and give a fellow a nasty bite as well if he goes to touch them. There's been many a neat job spoiled by a dog no bigger than a cat."

I can't express the repugnance I felt to the man as I sat beside him and heard him talk like this. It was no more than any other man might have said, and every word of it true, but I disliked him so.

Mrs. Dalrymple would not talk about the robbery at all; the very thought of such things made her nervous, she said, and indeed she looked so pale and ill, though she said she did not feel worse than usual, that I left off speaking to her about it.

She looked to me like a person who never slept, and I have known her fall asleep all at once in the daytime when I have been talking to her and then wake with a terrified start, as if she feared that something had happened during her brief unconsciousness. I fancied her husband was not kind to her, and yet I never saw anything but courtesy on his part towards her.

Summer and autumn passed away and the

winter set in cold and dark, and Mrs. Dalrymple and I were firmer friends than ever. We passed so much of our time in the early evening together. Charlie could not get home till after eight on certain nights in the week and I was nervous. We were very much alike in some of our tastes, and agreed wonderfully about most feminine matters; but Mrs. Dalrymple had one curious antipathy which I could not make out; she would never look at my poultry run of which I was so proud.

She could not bear fowls, she said. Mr. Dalrymple was interested in them, but she disliked them excessively, and she would not even look at a very beautiful hen which her husband gave Charlie for me, and which I prized highly from its rarity.

He took the right way to win me over to like him a little better by finding for me the lovely addition to my feathered flock. She was quite white all over; a lovely pearly white, with gleams in it here and there like the inside of a shell, and she had an erect black crest.

She was a dainty little lady and kept herself beautifully clean, and when she became acquainted with her new quarters she grew tame to a degree and laid golden-tinted eggs with a rich flavour that would have brought their price had I chosen to sell them.

She had so evidently been a pet that I remarked on the fact to Mr. Dalrymple, and he said yes. He should not have had her if her former proprietors had been able to keep her, from which I inferred that she had belonged to someone who had fallen on evil fortunes.

Mrs. Dalrymple knew nothing about it, she said. It would be someone that her husband knew in the way of business, she supposed, and as she seemed somewhat annoyed about it I did not talk to her on the subject any more; indeed, Charlie and I had an adventure which put the hen and everything else out of our heads for awhile just after the new year.

We had been out to a party at the house of one of the managers of the firm, a festivity which I had dreaded extremely, and enjoyed very much after all, and I had worn the chain that Mrs. Dalrymple had given to me a long time before.

Our hostess was most kind in trying to make me feel at ease with her, and she succeeded so well that I found myself talking to her about my home and my neighbours in utter oblivion of the difference in our positions. All at once she started and said to me:

"May I ask you a question, my dear?"

"Certainly," I replied, wondering. "Anything you like."

"It is rude, I know, but where did you get that chain?"

"It was given me," I answered, taking it off and putting it into her hand, "by the very lady of whom I was speaking just now—Mrs. Dalrymple."

"Ah! your neighbour. Where did she get it?"

I was glad to be able to answer, for I had heard all about it. Mr. Dalrymple had picked it up with several others at the shop of a dealer who was selling off.

"Where? What shop?" Mrs. Vivian said. "My dear child, don't think me crazy; but this chain is mine!"

"Yours, madam?" was all that I could say.

"Yes, mine. My jewel case was stolen about three years ago, and none of its contents were ever recovered. This chain was amongst them. See here, this little plate lifts up, and there is a tiny likeness underneath, the portrait of a dear sister of mine, who died young."

The tears stood in Mrs. Vivian's eyes as she spoke, and she turned her head away to conceal them.

"I am so glad to be able to return it," I said, hesitatingly, "and I'm sure Mrs. Dalrymple will be as glad to hear what has become of it."

"I don't like to take it away from you, child," the good lady said, and she would not let me go out of the house till she had made me accept a gold chain, too light for her now she had grown fat, she said, but which was worth ten times as much as the little trinket I had been the means of restoring to her.

Charlie and I were driven home in a trap of Mrs. Vivian's—an open one, for their close carriage was in request for some of the family. But I was so warmly wrapped up in shawls and rugs that I could not possibly feel the cold, and enjoyed careering through the bright, frosty air immensely.

We were skirting Blackheath, where Mr. and Mrs. Vivian lived, when we met coming towards us a little pony trap, very low and somewhat shabby-looking, I thought; but that might have been the moonlight. The man who was driving it was wrapped up as we were and had a thick, fair beard and head of hair.

He seemed to me to be trying to keep out of sight, and in doing so got too near a low tree that he was passing and his hat was knocked off by a bough. He pulled up to get down for it and turned his eyes on us, and as I am a living woman the eyes were those of Mr. Dalrymple. I could hardly suppress a scream, but I did manage not to cry out, remembering the strange man on the box, but I pinched Charlie's arm till he grunted and asked me what on earth was the matter.

I told him, and he said I was a donkey. I was always fancying things about that man. But I knew it was no fancy, and all the rest of the way home I was wondering what Mr. Dalrymple could be doing at Blackheath at that time of night, and disquieted too. I saw him the next morning as Charlie was going away and my husband told him of my saying I had seen him. He only smiled and said he had been too busy all the night to have any time for drives, and asked me to come in and see Mrs. Dalrymple. He was going to bed, as he generally did, and she was not very well, and she would be better for a little brightening up.

I went in, nothing loth, for I wanted to tell her about the chain and how nice Mrs. Vivian had been. She must have been worse than he thought her, for all of a sudden, while I was telling her, she fainted away, and I had some trouble to bring her to her senses again.

It might have been a week after all this, certainly not more, when another queer thing happened.

I was very busy about the house one morning, when Mary came to me with the news that a gentleman wanted to speak to me.

"You should have said I was engaged, Mary," I said, somewhat sharply, for I was not exactly in company trim.

"I did, ma'am," Mary replied, "but he said you would speak to him for a minute. It was a matter of business. Here's his card, ma'am."

"Mr. Robert Merryweather." I did not know the name in the least, and I went to our tiny drawing-room in some trepidation. I need not have felt any. I saw a benign-looking old gentleman with a pleasant voice and manner, who said he was a naturalist and had been informed that I had in my possession a very rare fowl of a species hardly known in England—would it be asking too much to be allowed to see her?

I was half frightened; but he was so civil and looked so harmless that, though I wished with all my heart that Charlie was at home, it ended in my taking him down the garden and showing him my pretty Queen Esther as we had christened my bonnie bird.

She behaved herself very well, and allowed herself to be handled as she always did, and Mr. Merryweather praised her beauty and examined her all over in a fashion that plainly showed he was a connoisseur in poultry.

"She has lost a toe," he said, showing me her foot.

"Yes, before I had her. She was given me." "Perhaps it was done to mark her. Such things are done often."

"It is very cruel, then," I said, with a shudder at the idea.

And then we shut Queen Esther up again and walked back to the house.

"How did you know I had her?" I asked, before he bade me good bye. "She has never been out of the garden."

"I think it was some gossip of your servant that first made it known—anyway the news

came to me in a roundabout way, and I can only hope I have not offended you by my curiosity."

I assured him that I had only been too pleased to let him see her, and he went away, asking me casually as he did so who was that elegant woman in the next garden. It was only Mrs. Dalrymple, looking more aristocratic than ever in a long, sealskin jacket, to which she had transferred her big silver buttons.

CHAPTER IV.

THE END OF THE STORY.

It was only two days after the visit of the old gentleman, and I had not seen Mrs. Dalrymple since. She had been out all one day and part of the other, and there had been something very odd in her manner as she returned my greeting through the window when she passed once.

Charlie said I was foolish to think of it at all; there was nothing the Dalrymples could possibly be offended at; I should find she had only been worried about something, and she would doubtless come in as usual to-morrow.

I hoped she would, for it struck me there was fear in her face as I saw it. I wanted so to tell her all about the hen and the gentleman's visit, though I am sure she would have heard of it, for our servants gossiped, as girls will, and Mary was enraptured with the old man, who had given her sixpence and been as amiable to her as he was to me.

Charlie was rather vexed about it altogether, and said I ought to have refused to show him Queen Esther. I couldn't have done it, but perhaps he could if he had been at home. Anyway, there was no harm done; at least, I did not think so. I thought so afterwards, but Charlie said it was all for the best; things might have come about even more disagreeably than they did.

I was finishing my breakfast—for Charlie had gone away early that day, and I had been waiting on him and neglected my own meal—and I was dawdling over it, as it is nice to do sometimes, when Mary came running in with her face all blurred with frightened tears and shaking so that she could hardly speak.

"Whatever is the matter?" I asked, thinking I hardly knew what.

"Oh, ma'am, he's took!" was Mary's anything but lucid explanation.

"Is anyone dead?" I asked, thinking that was what she meant by "took." "Who is it?"

"No, ma'am, he isn't dead; he's took. The police have got him and her too, and Lizzie's put this over the garden wall, and says will you take care of it for her missis till she can send it to her? She was that taken aback that she went off in nothing but an old shawl as she was doing something to the flowers in, poor thing."

Then, and not till then, did I notice that Mary had over her arm Mrs. Dalrymple's sealskin jacket with the silver buttons, and I seemed to understand everything in a moment.

"They say he's been a burglar for years, ma'am," the girl said, "and he's been that artful that no one could catch him; but it's done now, ma'am, all along of—"

She stopped suddenly, as if afraid to go on. There was evidently something more to tell.

"Go on, Mary," I said; "tell me what you mean."

"It's all along of the white hen, ma'am."

"The white hen?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"How? What had Queen Esther to do with it?"

"Everything, ma'am. She was stole; and the gentleman that came here wasn't a gentleman at all, but a nasty detective in a white wig. That's what they say, ma'am, but I can't believe that Mrs. Dalrymple is a thief. Can you?"

It was hard indeed to think so, but, alas, there was the fact. I found Mary's story was true, and that I had been the unconscious instrument of bringing about the capture of the most notorious burglar of the day.

I stayed in the back part of the house sick and frightened, while crowds gathered outside in front, and all sorts of gossip reached me through Mary of what was going on.

Mr. Dalrymple and his wife had been arrested very quietly, just after the former had come home from his nightly avocations, and had gone without making any resistance. The place was in the hands of the police, but the story of all the things that were found at No. 20, Sycamore Gardens, is public property now, so I need not enlarge on it.

I telegraphed for Charley, for I was too frightened to remain alone, and he came to me as soon as he could. It was not a minute too soon, for Mary was parleying with two policemen at the gate when he came. The men were civil enough, but they wanted to come in, and I was almost out of my wits with fear.

"Come in, of course," Charley said, when he understood what they wanted. "If we can throw any light on this business of course we will. But my wife is frightened, you see. She was not prepared for all this."

"And yet your good lady has been very useful in the matter if she only knew," one of them said, civilly enough. "Mrs. Vivian's chain and the white hen have done Nick Barlow's business."

He was civil enough, and yet I felt I hated him and everyone of his calling for having made me betray the woman I called my friend.

"Surely Mrs. Dalrymple has nothing to do with it," I said, and he smiled in reply.

"Time will show," he said. "It doesn't do to speak, you know. In the meantime we want the lady's jacket, if you please."

"Her jacket!" I said, in amazement. "Surely they did not want to deprive her of that."

"H'm. That's as it may be," was the quiet reply, and I explained to Charley that Lizzie had asked me to take care of it till her mistress should want it.

"It is cold now," I said, "and she will send for it, I expect, if she has to stay in prison."

"She won't get out yet awhile, ma'am," the officer said. "Mr. Dalrymple, as he has called himself, has been a clever fellow; but his wife has matched him. She is a sharp one, she is. Will you let us look at the jacket, if you please? From information we have received we think it may have been made serviceable."

I did not understand him in the least, but I fetched the costly thing from my bedroom, where I had hung it up, and gave it into the man's hands.

"You've been pretty closely looked after, sir," he said to Charley, "or you might have laid yourself open to grave suspicion. With your good leave we'll see what these buttons are made of."

And with a knife and a dexterous twist of his hand he wrenched off the top of every one of the buttons that I had admired so much and showed us that they were hollow. Not one of them was empty.

Mrs. Dalrymple might well have transferred one of those buttons to every jacket she wore, for there were bank notes in every one of them, and in some of them Charley recognised some of the money stolen from his place of business.

Sewn into the lining there were some valuable pieces of jewellery and lace. How could she wear it as she did and sit with me and talk and fascinate me, knowing, as she did, that the touch of a policeman's hand on her shoulder would be like that of Ithuriel's spear and show all the hideous deformity underneath?

The men were very civil. There was not the slightest shadow of blame or suspicion on us, but there was a horrible sense of solitude and desolation on me when they went away with the mutilated jacket and left us to the gaping crowds outside and the knowledge that we had lost a very pleasant and agreeable neighbour.

I need not tell the shameful story of the trial and condemnation of Mr. Dalrymple, who had had as many aliases as he had committed robberies almost, and their name was Legion; that miserable story has been public property for many a year now.

I didn't care for him, but I shed many a bitter

tear for her when I thought of her, for I had learned to love her dearly. There came to me a little blurred letter before their trial, which I have kept ever since.

"I must write," she said, "or I shall go mad. You don't know all, and I am to blame for ever letting a good woman be kind to me. But I thirsted so for a kind word sometimes, and you spoke to me like an angel, God bless you for it. I don't want to exonerate myself at my husband's expense, for he is my husband, but I must tell you my story, which is true, so help me Heaven. I was a lost woman before I met him, a creature with no place in the world, and but one feeling, I think—the longing to get back—oh! how I wanted to regain what I had lost—a place amongst honest people. It was always the same story. I was always well behaved enough, but no one could employ me, and I was despairing when the way came as I thought. I met my husband, and he told me he loved me and would marry me and make me an honest woman, 'if I would be good.' Good! I had no other wish, and I fell into the trap. I was wanted for a decoy, a helpmate, a hiding place for his spoils, and there was no drawing back then. Till I met you I did not care what became of me, and then in your sweet companionship I began to learn how deep was the gulf that divided us. Don't curse me that I tried to keep you as a friend. It was like a glimpse of Heaven to me, and you will be rewarded someday for your goodness to an outcast like me. I shall never see you again, but till my dying day I shall bless your name and the day I met you."

This was all except a pitiful little postscript:

"Try and believe that I was innocent in the matter of giving you the chain and the fowl. The former I honestly believed my husband to have bought, the latter I knew nothing about till it was safe in your poultry house."

I did believe her, and I went to see her, with Charley as my escort. He did not come into the prison with me, and they let me go to her and take her hand. I was so sorry for her, and told her so in the gloom of that horrible place, and begged her to remember that "it is never too late to mend."

Everyone knows the fate of her husband now. How he tried to escape till the officers were puzzled what to do with him, and finally no one knew how he managed to poison himself soon after his sentence of imprisonment for life was pronounced.

Here was different, poor soul. "Five years' penal servitude," and I shivered and turned sick as I read it, and thought of that magnificent hair falling under the prison shears, and that faultless figure drooping in the prison dress.

I saw her again, and I think the remembrance of that interview has helped to put this story into my head. All the misery of that dreadful time is ten years past now, and I am getting matronly and my children are great, healthy, frolicsome creatures that make Charley and I look about us, though he has four hundred a year now, and wonder how they are to be brought up and educated.

Two years ago my servant came to me—we have moved from Sycamore Gardens a long time ago—and told me a lady wanted me, an elderly lady, she said, and I went into the breakfast parlour to see someone whom I did not recognise in a close bonnet and white cap, and a pale face that worked strangely at the sight of me.

"Forgive me! Forgive me!" she gasped. "I could not go away from England without looking on your face once more."

And then I knew her, and she told me that she had served her time in prison and had been befriended by some good ladies who make it their business to help the outcasts of the world, and that she had worked her way back under their kind supervision till she was deemed worthy to go to Canada to help to superintend a home for destitute girls there.

She went away with kisses on her lips, for I had loved her dearly in that brief time when we were neighbours, and Charley cared for her comfort on the voyage she was making, as he had the power to do through his connection with many shipping houses.

We saw her no more. In less than a year she died, and with my name on her lips, they told me afterwards. I don't think I was sorry. I knew we should never see her again. And it was better so, for "there is joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance."

OUR COLUMNS FOR THE CURIOUS.

CHARLES II.'S WATCH.—This watch Charles gave to "Mistress" Jane Lane, in acknowledgment of her services in helping him to escape from Mosely to Bristol, at the same time signifying his wish that it should always belong to the eldest daughter of the house of Lane. The watch was regularly handed down to the eldest Miss Lane for the time being, until three generations back, when the then eldest daughter married a Mr. Lucy, of Charlecote, Warwickshire, and took the watch with her. It was hers, of course, for life, but she lived to a great age, and at her death, the Lucys pleading that owing to the number of years which had passed the claims of the Lanes had lapsed to them, somewhat unfairly, it appears, retained it at Charlecote, leaving the Lanes to their remedy by an action at law in trover. But ill-gotten goods never stay long with their new owner, and the watch, together with other valuable property, was carried off from Charlecote by a gang of burglars, who broke into the house some forty years ago. The watch has never been recovered, having been probably melted down.

ROBERT BRUCE'S BROOCH.—The Queen keeps this brooch among her most favourite treasures. This relic was presented to Her Majesty in 1842 by the late Admiral Sir John Macdougall, who was descended from Somerled, Thane of Argyll and the Isles, and lineal descendant of the ancient Lords of Lorne. When Bruce was retreating through the narrow passage at Lochan-Our three of the Macdougalls made a simultaneous attack upon him and were defeated; one of them springing at Bruce's neck dispossessed him of his cloak, or plaid, which in the hurry of the moment was left in the dying grasp of the clansman. Hence Bruce's brooch remained as a trophy in the family of Lorne.

COST OF QUEEN ELIZABETH'S BOARD.—Her Majesty's diet for breakfast, dinner and supper on a flesh day cost £11 7s. 2d., or for 220 days £2,793 16s. 8d. On a fish day it cost £9 11s. 9d., making for 145 days £1,390 9s. 9d., the total amount for the year being £3,804 19s. 5d.

ON BANNS.—Banns were first directed to be published by Hubert Walter, about A.D. 1200, and the constitution of Wm. la Zouch, A.D. 1347, states that "some contriving unlawful marriages and affecting the dark, lest their deeds should be reproved, do procure every day, in a damnable manner, marriages to be celebrated without publication of banns duly and lawfully made by means of chaplains that have no regard to the fear of God and the prohibition of the laws."

MORAVIAN COURAGE.—A deep impression was made on Wesley during his outward passage to America with the Moravians, by the circumstances that during imminent peril from a storm at sea they calmly sang on—with death, but not the fear of death, before their eyes. Having admired their meekness, tranquillity and freedom from every trace of resentment during the earlier part of the voyage, Wesley was now curious, as Southey relates the incident, "to see whether they were equally delivered from the spirit of fear, and this he had an opportunity of ascertaining. In the midst of the psalm with

which they began their service the sea broke over, split the main sail, covered the ship, and poured in between the decks, as if," he says, "the great deep had already swallowed us up. A dreadful screaming was heard among the English colonists; the Moravians calmly sang on. Wesley afterwards asked one of them if he was not afraid at that time. He replied, 'I thank God, no.' He was then asked if the women and children were not afraid. His answer was, 'No, our women and children are not afraid to die.'"

NOTES ON DANCING.—"We are misled," says Mr. Herman Merivale, "by our modern notions when we marvel at Sir Christopher Hatton, the dancing Chancellor, or at Elizabeth for being smitten with his attractive movements. In France not only Richelieu danced a new saraband in the queen's boudoir, but the great and grave Sully indulged in similar exhibitions, and the great Jansenist Abbé Arnauld recounts, albeit with some embarrassment, how he was forced to dance at the Court of Modena. Dances of the saraband and galop kind were performed in church in the middle ages, and wild work they made of it. At Limoges on St. Martial's day the people danced in church to the tunes of the canticles." Socrates and Plato not only danced themselves but applied very impolite language to those who were too ignorant to follow their example. Gregory Thaumaturgus introduced it into divine service, and St. Basil strongly recommended the art to his hearers, telling them it would be their principal occupation in Heaven, and therefore they had better practise betimes on earth.

THE PURITANS AND CHURCH ORGANS.—While the political supremacy of the Puritans lasted in England they sold the church organs without caring to what use they might be applied, some of them being set up in caverns. Southey remarks ancient this that these instruments thus disposed of could not be of very great value. Thirty shillings was the price of one sold in 1565, which belonged to Lambeth Church, and Mr. Denne, the antiquary, says of organs generally in country parish churches "that they might more properly have been termed a box of whistles." A pair of organs was the term then in use, meaning a set, so a pair of cards for a pack.

THE CUSTODY OF THE GREAT SEAL.—During the absence of Henry III. in Gascony his wife, Queen Eleanor, was entrusted with the Great Seal, and is the only female to whom that awful symbol has ever been in charge.

THE FIRST ENGLISH BELL-FOUNDER.—The first Englishman known to have been a bell-founder by trade lived in 1284, when he made four bells for the cathedral church of Exeter, none of which remain, and one dated 1296 is the most ancient identified in England. A very old bell is still hanging in the steeple of Cold Ashby Church, which bears the date of 1317. In Leicestershire 140 of the early period have been found. Northamptonshire does not seem to have boasted of a bell-founder until the end of the sixteenth century. Many of the Northampton bells were made by Newcomb, of Leicester, the two which hang beside "Maria," at Cold Ashby, being by him with the inscription, "Newcomb, of Leicester, made by me, 1606."

A WONDERFUL WATCH.—A Copenhagen watchmaker, of the name of Sonderberg, is reported to have made a watch which requires no winding up, inasmuch as it performs that work itself by means of an electric current. An electric magnet fixed inside the watch keeps the springs perpetually in a state of tension. All that is required to keep the watch going is to preserve the battery in proper working order, for which purpose one or two inspections in a twelvemonth are said to be sufficient.

AN ANCIENT PIECE OF ARTILLERY.—A heavy gun, believed to be one of the oldest pieces of ordnance in existence, has been sent home by the Governor of Cyprus for the Museum of Artillery at Woolwich. It is of cast iron and weighs 25 cwt. The manufacture is probably Venetian, and the ancient weapon is well shaped, in the form of a cup or goblet, the mouth being

wide and deep to hold a large stone shot, while the narrower pedestal is hollowed to receive a powder charge. A round stone, weighing about 6 cwt., has been sent with the gun, and it is suggested that this is the kind of missile fired from it, as proved to have been the case with similar guns in England. One which it somewhat resembles is already in the Rotunda at Woolwich, having been found in the moat at Bodiam Abbey, and specimens of the stone cannon-balls are already in that museum. The gun from Cyprus is in much better preservation, and has apparently suffered little decay. The cup, or mortar, is 19 inches deep and 18 inches across, and the external diameter is 26 inches, which allows 4 inches for the thickness of metal.

THE ANTIQUITY OF FANS.—The fan is of very ancient origin. A French journal tracing its history says that the papyrus was one of the first plants from which fans were made. In ancient Greece the first fans used were made of myrtle, acacia, and plane-tree. It was not until the fifth century, B.C., that the peacock was known in Greece, and from this epoch dates the use among the Grecian ladies of the peacock's tail as a new and elegant kind of fan. As the art of fan-makers arose the use of feathers alone came to be discarded, as they were found to be too pliable. The idea was conceived of placing between each pair of feathers a thin strip of wood, giving both resistance and durability. Fans are often referred to in Latin authors. Plautus mentions the flabelliferæ, or female slaves who carried parasols and fans to shade and drive away flies from their mistresses. Fans of peacock's feathers remained in fashion through the middle ages and up to the seventh century, not only in Italy but in England and France. Fans of ostrich feathers came into favour gradually, excluding those of peacock, and such fans—as used in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries—appear in Titian's pictures. Leaves of palm-trees, reeds and odoriferous wood are among substances of which fans are made in foreign countries, for where has the fan-maker's art been brought to such perfection as in Paris?

EDUCATING THE OYSTER.—Although it has been doubted that an oyster has been so far subjugated as to "follow its master up and down stairs," a consummation which might be accepted as a positive step in the rise toward ultimate civilisation, at least, according to "Lewes's Seaside Studies," oysters are susceptible of being educated to a certain extent. In the great establishment on the coast of Calvados the merchants teach oysters to keep their shells closed when out of the water, by which means the liquor retained keeps their gills moist, and they arrive in far distant Paris lively. The process may be worthy of extensive publicity; it is this: No sooner is an oyster taken out of the sea than it closes its shells, and opens them after a certain time—from fatigue, it is said, but more probably because the shock it received by removal into the air, causing its muscles to contract, has passed away. The Calvados men take advantage of this to exercise the oysters, and make them accustomed to be out of the water by leaving them daily in the atmosphere for longer and longer periods. This has the desired effect; the well-educated mollusk keeps its doors closed many consecutive hours, and so long as the shell is closed its gills are kept moist.

THE HORSE.—In France when a horse reaches the age of twenty or thirty, it is destined for a chemical factory; it is first relieved of its hair, which is used to stuff cushions and saddles; then it is skinned; the hoofs serve to make combs. Next the carcass is placed in a cylinder and cooked by steam at a pressure of three atmospheres; a cock is opened, which lets the steam run off; then the remains are cut up, the leg bones are sold to make knife handles, etc., and the coarser, the ribs, the head, etc., are made into animal black and glue. The first are calcined in cylinders, and the vapours, when condensed, form the chief source of carbonate of ammonia, which constitutes the base of nearly all the ammoniacal salts. There is an animal oil yielded which makes a capital insecticide and a vermifuge. The bones, to make glue, are

dissolved in muriatic acid, which takes the phosphates of lime away; the soft element, retaining the shape of the bone, is dissolved in boiling water, cast into squares and dried on nets. The phosphate of lime, acted upon by sulphuric acid and calcined with carbon, produces phosphorus for our lucifer matches. The remaining flesh is distilled to obtain the carbonate of ammonia; the resulting mass is pounded up with potash, then mixed with old nails and iron of every description; the whole is calcined and yields magnificent yellow crystals—prussiate of potash, with which tissues are dyed a Prussian blue and iron transferred into steel; it also forms the basis of cyanide of potassium and prussic acid, the two most terrible poisons known in chemistry.

It is possible that Don Carlos will take up his residence for a short time in Scotland.

If a lady obtains damages against a man for breach of promise of marriage, and he becomes a bankrupt, has she priority of claim over other creditors? The question has been raised in Yorkshire, where a grocer filed a petition for liquidation (his debts were estimated at £700), there being at the time judgment against him on a breach of promise suit for £200. An injunction has been issued restraining the lady from proceedings.

EMPLOYMENT is given by the railways in Great Britain and Ireland to about 500,000 persons.

A TERRIBLE accident happened at Suresnes, the other day in the house of the famous milliner Worth. The sister of Madame Worth, a young girl of eighteen, had gone upstairs to her bedroom to change her silk dress for a muslin one, when a candle set fire to the muslin, and before help could arrive the girl was frightfully burnt; death ensued after a quarter of an hour of terrible suffering.

In South America are shirt trees which grow to be 50 feet high. The Indians cut from them cylindrical pieces, two feet in diameter, from which they peel the red and fibrous bark. This bark affords them a sort of sack of coarse texture without a seam. The opening serves for the head, and two lateral holes are cut for the arms.

A VOLENDAM fisherman was, a short time ago, fishing for anchovies in the Zuyder Zee. On drawing in his nets he found entangled in them a heavy lump of some substance covered with mussels. On inspection he found that the mass was mainly an aggregate of little heaps of coins, which examination proved to be mostly silver pieces, 450 in number. They were chiefly ducatoons; there were also a few Spanish and other gold pieces. They were all dated between 1660 and 1680.

WARMTH.—In ancient times energy of mind and strength of body were supposed to be the effects of warmth, while depression of spirits and bodily weakness were ascribed to cold. Modern science has explained and modified these theories concerning the production of physical force, but in the main it has confirmed the principle of causation. In a general sense, it may be said that animal heat, when duly generated within normal limits, is the concomitant of vigor. Practically, therefore, warmth is to be sought and cold avoided; but with this qualification, that the heat must be elicited by organic processes going on within the body, and not borrowed from without. The chief, if not the only use of wraps and warm surroundings is to avoid the loss of animal heat by abstraction. It is neither scientific nor hygienic to trust to the external sources of supply for the warmth we require to live well, happily and usefully. The food is more than raiment, and those who desire to help the poor and melancholy over their "dead points" in the course of life should be chiefly anxious to feed them well and sufficiently. So in the management of self—to live well is to feed appropriately. Stimulants do not give strength, because they cannot add to the normal and healthy sources of animal heat. Nutriment is the only true fuel.

FACETIÆ.

BELLES WITHOUT RINGS.

It is proposed by a party in the States, says the "Standard," to do away with the wedding-ring, substituting a bracelet with a clasp, which the lady can snap as an occasional reminder for her husband. Snapping turtles, these! The whole idea is a shabby thought. Punch.

FEMALE SUFFRAGE IN FRANCE.—Is M. Gambetta an advocate of woman's rights? As the candidate for Belleville, he ought to be a ladies' man. Punch.

A RISING DIFFICULTY.—Getting up with the lark. Moonshine.

COUNTER MARCHING.—Shop walking. Moonshine.

AN AWL-FUL FATE.—Bored to death. Moonshine.

As the facilities for flirting are so great in lawn tennis, might not the game be appropriately called love lawn tennis? Moonshine.

A DEAD LEVEL.—A flat churchyard. Moonshine.

AMBER SHAW.—The ruler of Afghanistan. Moonshine.

DURING the late hot weather the persons who felt the heat least were undoubtedly schoolmasters and foot guardsmen, for a schoolmaster keeps school however hot the weather may be, and a guardsman is allowed to go about in a bearskin (bare skin). Moonshine.

PRIZE WINNERS.—Brigands. Moonshine.

BITTER.

FASHIONABLE DENTIST: "Well, well; now let us see. Which tooth is it this time, my dear sir?"

CRUEL PATIENT: "You'll easily discover. 'Tis the same one you took out last week." Moonshine.

HOP-OSITION PARTIES.—Rival dancing masters. Moonshine.

A NOTORIOUS eavesdropper.—Rain.

MEN of measures.—Tailors.

WHEN must a man keep his word? When nobody takes it.

A "SLIP"-PERY MODE.

THE American Woman's Rights organ suggests that instead of courtship as at present conducted, the marriageable youth of both sexes should meet at intervals, and each write on a slip of paper the name of the person he or she would like to marry. All the papers would then be submitted to two discreet individuals, and if any two slip-writers were found by them to have declared a mutual attachment, the fact would be announced, and marriage would duly follow. The suggestion has not found favour, though, for it is thought that there must be more "slips" than usual between the cup and the lip this new way! Fun.

A CASE OF GREAT ROYAL PRO-FANITY.

THE Queen Isabella of Spain has a fan for every day in the year, it is reported. This being repeated in the presence of a French wag, he said that it was more than a fan-cy of the Queen's—it was, in fact, a fan-tasy—a disease. Asked what disease it could be she suffered from, he promptly replied, "Ella-a-fan-tiasis!" Fun.

A NOBBLER.

SOLOMONS: "S' help me! Sorry to hear your stupid brother has left his berth, and gone for a soldier; but there—there, we musn't be too hard on young fellows, Jones; I was as big a fool as any of 'em when I wash young." **JONES:** "Yes, Solomon, and you ain't an old man now, Solomon!" Fun.

BEARDING BARLEE.

The inhabitants of British Honduras call on Lord Kimberley to recall their governor, whose

name is Barlee. But our Colonial Secretary declines to do so, probably because he feels that any action he took against Governor Barlee would be decidedly against the grain. Fun.

WISE IN HIS GENERATION.

MAMMA: "Cyril, you're a naughty boy; and I've a good mind to whip you."

CYRIL: "Have a better mind, mammy, and don't." Fun.

BUYERS AND SELLAR.

No wonder Mr. Craig Sellar was not chosen by the Scotch constituency he wished to represent. In the neighbourhood of the modern Athens the popular taste would naturally tend in an Attic direction, and wish to have nothing to do with the Sellar. Fun.

WRONG IN TOTO!

THE total number of fish seized at Billingsgate averages about one ton per day. This is of course a "net" total, and yet, at the same time, a most "gross" one; we would call it a "foul" total, in fact, were it not a "fish" one! Fun.

A YOUNG TIME-SERVER.

RECTOR: "And why doesn't little Tommy come to Sunday-school now, Mrs. Hodge?"

MRS. H.: "Well, sir, he attended pretty reg'lar up to Whitsuntide, when the school-treat was given; and you know they allus falls off after that." Fun.

BOOK-KEEPERS are especially int-lined to pen-siveness.

CEREMATIOMISTS do not believe that a little urning is a dangerous thing.

MORE ACCIDENTS.

A TRULY said and shocking accident is reported from Dover, Mr. and Mrs. John Smith, a newly married couple but just started on their honeymoon trip, whilst sitting at an open window at the Lord Warden, "fell out." Judy.

AN EXHIBITION SELDOM SEEN.—The Loan Exhibition of umbrellas. Judy.

"I'm very much attached to my kennel," as the dog said, as he was being chained up for the night. Judy.

REFUTED QUARTS.—Most diamond-felds. Judy.

PARADOXICAL.

A BARBER may pursue his vocation, still he must not be barber-ous. In other words, a barber is allowed to soap his customers as much as he likes, but he must not lather his wife. Judy.

A GOOD OPENING FOR A YOUNG MAN.—His mouth. Judy.

WHEN does rain become too familiar with a lady? When it begins to patter on her back.

HARD READING.—Sermons in stones. Funny Folks.

THE "PLACE DE LA BOER-SE."—The Transvaal. Funny Folks.

SMITHIANA.

WHICH is the "biggest" of all the innumerable Smiths located near London? D'ye give him up? Hammersmith. Funny Folks.

QUITE THE TON.

A SILK mercer named Mantle has left orders that he is to be buried at Rendham, in Suffolk, and that over his grave is to be laid a flat block of granite weighing a ton or more. What a piece of stone! What a Mantle-piece! Funny Folks.

PARAF-FINESSE.

AMERICAN whiskey is smuggled into Canada in pretended oil barrels. What oil? Fusel oil. Funny Folks.

"NO GREAT (CAR)-LOS."

DON CARLOS is naturally very indignant at his summary expulsion from France. He says he was never in his life so put out. Funny Folks.

A NEW ÆSTHETIC BIRD.—The cockatoo-too. Funny Folks.

HELEN MANVERS.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

BACK and forth, back and forth across the room, with crimson cheeks and wildly beating heart, walked Helen Manvers, brushing away with impatient hand the hair that, loosened from its confinement, fell in ripples and waves about her. It was of no use; the tears would come in spite of all her efforts to restrain them, and at last, sinking down on her knees by the bedside, she gave herself up to such a passion of weeping as in all her life had never moved her before. The cool night wind came in and stirred the draperies at the open window; the moonbeams, timidly chasing the shadows from the distant corner of the room, at last fell acrossing around the form of the young girl at the bedside, still weeping and sobbing her very life away, while the jewelled hand of the watch on the dressing-table told that the night was almost gone.

But not until the morning light broke over the distant hill-tops did Helen Manvers, with a last cry to Heaven for help and strength, arise from her knees, and, bathing her swollen face and eyes in water, prepare for bed. Her tears were all spent, the passion gone from her heart; but in its stead was a dull, continuous pain. What thoughts came to her as she lay sick and weak, trying in vain to forget her sorrow and pain in sleep!

Reader, shall I go back one year in the life of this girl and introduce her to you under happier circumstances? For until that time no shadow or thought of care had ever entered her young life.

Her brother Harry, returning from the village one evening, brought with him Guy Bernard the son of Squire Bernard up on the hill, who had just returned from India.

Helen had never met him before, as nearly his whole life had been spent abroad, but she recognised him immediately, so many times had she seen his face among the pictures up at The Hall, and smiled to herself at her brother's elaborate introduction.

If this was their first meeting, however, it was by no means their last, for Guy became from that evening a daily and welcome visitor at the Manverses' house. They all liked him—from Grandmamma Manvers, to whom he always showed so much reverence and respect, down to golden-haired Bessie, the spoiled pet and darling of the household, who would sit on his knee for hours listening with painful interest to his wonderful fairy tales, little dreaming that they were all manufactured for her especial benefit.

As for Guy and Helen, they became immediately the best of friends. It was as if a dear, long-absent brother had returned, and she often told him it could not be possible that they had been strangers a month ago, for she felt she had known him all her life. Like Bessie, she never tired of his stories, and a new and delightful world was opened to her as she followed him in his travels and adventures in foreign countries.

Helen was an active member of both church and Sunday school, and being a young lady of means and leisure, willing and anxious to do all she could, very many were the calls made upon her time. Harry often complained that she might as well be in India, or some other place, as she spent nearly all her time in the missionary cause. But though never neglecting her duties, nor allowing any pleasure to take her from them, yet scarcely a day passed but she found time for a sail or a ride or a delightful ramble in the woods with Guy, in all of which excursions Bessie and sometimes Harry accompanied them.

So passed away, like a beautiful dream, those sunny summer days. But however bright and pleasant the dream may be the dreamer is sure to awaken at last; so the time came when those two young people were awakened, or one of



[FAIRY TALES.]

them, at least. Helen had some other company one evening, and Guy, coming in quite late, still lingered out on the piazza long after bidding the rest good night. Finally, rising to go, he stood with her hand in his, apologising for staying so late, when suddenly and almost unconsciously, it seemed, he clasped her in his arms, and in eager, hurried words told her of his great love. Surprised, indignant, she drew herself from him with an angry exclamation on her lips; but a glance at his face, white with emotion, checked it, and with a sudden revulsion of feeling she sank into a chair and burst into a passion of weeping. Scarcely less moved than she, Guy bent over her, and would have drawn her to his arms again, but she repulsed him; so, with a great fear in his heart, he waited patiently beside her until her tears should cease.

"Excuse this weakness, Guy," Helen said, at last, rising; "but it was so sudden—and I am so sorry!" And the sweet voice broke down again.

"No, no! do not say that!" he cried. "Oh, my darling," taking her hand and looking into her tear-dimmed eyes, "you love me, do you not? You will not—you cannot—be cruel enough to tell me you do not love me?"

"I must tell you the truth," she answered, sadly. "I do not love you, Guy, and believe me, that until this moment I never dreamed of your loving me."

With a low groan he bowed his head upon her shoulder.

"Do not feel badly—please, please, do not Guy!" she said, with quivering voice. "Oh, I shall never cease to blame myself for this!"

"You are not in the least to blame," he said, after a long silence. "I have loved you from the first moment I saw you, and have longed to tell you so a thousand times. But tell me, Helen, do you not think that in time you might learn to love me?"

Then, looking steadfastly into his eyes, Helen answered:

"You must not go away with any false hope in your heart, Guy, for we can never be anything but friends."

Once more he clasped her to his heart, and left on her lips a passionate, farewell kiss; then without a word he went away, and she was left alone with her thoughts.

So Helen and Guy would never be quite the same again. The sun might shine just as brightly to-morrow as yesterday, and the future might hold in store for them even happier days than they had ever yet known, but as Guy would never forget the night when life seemed to him a dreary blank, since the only girl he ever loved had refused him, so would Helen never sit again with the moonlight falling all around her but the pleading voice, the passionate kiss would come back to her, for they were stamped upon her mind in one sad memory which time and change could never efface.

A firm in London in which Squire Bernard was interested had become involved in some sort

of an entanglement, and had written him to come and see about it.

So when he asked Guy, the morning after the above transpired, if he could not find time to go for a few days, Guy answered very readily that he could. But the days lengthened into weeks and the weeks into months before he was seen back again.

The fact was, Helen Manvers had gone to town to spend the winter, and whatever pleasure there was in life now for Guy was to be had near her who was so dear to him.

So, though business did not detain him, he made it his plea for staying. Helen led a very quiet life in town, but had plenty of admirers. Guy never intruded his attentions upon her, yet she was constantly surrounded with evidences of his watchful care and love. Her slightest wish was gratified, and nothing left undone to make her visit pleasant.

She felt and appreciated his kindness, but she was far from being happy. Her heart pitied him so much, and she felt that she did wrong to accept his attentions when every act revealed a love which his lips must not utter. Something of this she tried to tell him one evening, for the dozenth time, while admiring a beautiful bouquet he had just brought her. But his answer was ever the same.

"You know, Helen, you yourself proposed that we should be to each other like brother and sister, and surely you would allow a brother to do some such little kindness if his heart prompted it, would you not?"

Helen turned away from those wistful eyes, silent but unconvinced.

The winter passed away, and towards spring Guy found it necessary to go North. It was apparently a very sudden start, and Helen knew nothing of it until the night before his departure he called to tell her and bid her good bye. She was engaged, but she came to him immediately his card was sent up.

"Going away!" said she, aghast. "Going away—where?"

Drawing her down to a seat beside him, he told her, adding:

"I may be able to come back in a few weeks—possibly I shall be obliged to stay a year."

As Helen remained silent, he asked, after a little pause:

"Shall you miss me, Helen?"

"Miss you!" said she, sadly. "How can you ask such a question? But it is so sudden—I cannot realise yet that you are really going away."

"I hope you may miss me," he said, so earnestly that it brought the colour to her cheeks; and then he added, "We may write each other sometimes, may we not?"

"No," Helen answered, quickly, turning to him as she spoke; "it would not be right for us to correspond, Guy. You are going away, and you must forget me."

"So, Helen," he said, reproachfully, "you would deprive me of the only pleasure I could possibly have in my northern home! Could you find it in your heart to treat Harry thus?"

"My writing to Harry would be an entirely different thing; you know that very well, Guy; and why," she asked, almost passionately, "do you ask me to do what my conscience tells me would be wrong?"

He raised her hand and pressed it to his lips. "Forgive me, Helen, if I cannot look at these things in the light you do. I can see no possible harm in our writing each other."

And so, as usual, Guy's earnest arguments carried the day.

"But I must not detain you longer," he said, at last, rising, with a deep sigh. "And now good bye, dearest Helen."

"Good bye, Guy. I will pray every day that God may bless and be near you," she whispered, as she followed him to the door.

He looked at her for a moment, then once again pressed her closely to his heart, and she was left alone.

How lonely were the days after Guy's departure! Try as she would, Helen could not forget him; his image was constantly before her.

"It is because his going was so unexpected

that I miss him so much," she said to herself, as day after day passed, and she went about listless and sad, feeling that something had gone from her life. "It is so much better for him to be away; he will the sooner forget me."

Yet she found herself looking forward impatiently to a letter from him. It came at last. Her uncle brought it at the close of what had been to her a very dreary day. It was not a cheerful letter. It had not been a cheerful journey, since every hour had taken the writer farther and farther away from all he held most dear. But whatever the tone of the letter it did Helen a world of good.

"Poor Guy!" she said. "I will write to him this very night."

If she had been reserved and distant when with him there could be no possible need of it now, when a thousand miles lay between them. So, sitting down, she wrote him a long letter, telling him how lonely she was, how very, very much she missed him.

London had never been much more gay and lively than now at early spring-time, yet it had lost all its attractiveness for Helen. She longed for home and the dear ones, especially for Bessie.

"Dear Bessie! How have I contented myself so long away from you!"

So she surprised her friends one morning by declaring her intention to go home. Of course they all opposed it, but when her decision was made nothing could change it; and two days later found her safely at home, with Bessie in her arms.

The child was indeed overjoyed to see her, and the questions she asked and the stories she had to be told were innumerable.

At home once more, Helen was her old happy self, and took up most cheerfully her duties again. She had idled away the whole winter, she told her mother; and now to her schools, to Bessie's lessons, and her music she devoted nearly all her time.

Letters came regularly to her from Scotland, and if they breathed of something more than a brotherly regard for her Helen did not complain, but every week sent back an answer which inspired with hope the one who waited so anxiously for it.

"But a change came o'er the sunny sky," for as the glad summer came in, waking every flower and bird and living creature to new health and life and happiness, those letters from the North became very unfrequent; and not only that, but their tone was entirely changed. What the cause might be Helen did not conjecture. She thought of everything. She even compared some of Guy's last letters with those of earlier date, to see if indeed the same hand had penned them both.

"He has ceased to love me," she said to herself, at last. "I would have given Guy Bernard credit for more constancy. But they are all alike. He has probably seen some new face."

Though Guy's letters were evidently written in the best of spirits they were brief, and written only as the press of business allowed. He had spoken frequently of returning, and in his last had said he should try to be home in time to help the men through haying. Helen dreaded so much his coming—why she hardly knew. But she had an intense longing to get away, anywhere, she did not care, only that she need not meet him. She was cowardly, she told herself, and tried to overcome the weakness.

"Guy is coming home. I am so glad! Ain't you, Helen?" Bessie would ask a dozen times each day; and Helen, always evading the question, thought with a pang how little the child knew the truth.

Returning home from her mission school one day, tired and dejected, Helen turned aside into a shady lane to watch the reapers at their work, but repented a moment later when she saw coming toward her one whose figure and bearing she could not mistake for that of any other. More embarrassed than she had ever felt in her life, she gave her hand to Guy, but regained her composure immediately, as he met and greeted her as though they had parted but yesterday.

"You seem surprised to see me," he said.

"Yes," she answered. "I had no idea you were in this part of the world."

"No?" he laughed. "That shows of how little account I am in this place. I have been home three days."

Been home three days and had not called! This Helen noted while asking and answering all sorts of questions.

"And Bessie?" Guy asked. "I trust she is quite well?"

"Yes," Helen answered, "and she has talked of you incessantly since she heard you were coming back. I advise you not to tell her you have been here three days without calling."

Guy laughed.

"One must take time to get over the fatigue of travelling," he answered, lightly. "By the way," he continued, "I wonder what you people are going to have for dinner. I promised my mother a game dinner, but you see my bag is empty."

"Well, I really do not know," Helen answered, laughing. "But perhaps we may be able to find you something. You have only to tell mamma a pitiful story. It is against her principles to turn anybody away hungry."

So Guy turned about with her, and they proceeded slowly across the fragrant, new-mown fields to Mr. Manvers's house, where he was received by all most cordially, and especially by Bessie.

But all welcomed Guy back, or the young people of the place rather. There were a great many strangers in the usually quiet little village and several visitors up at The Hall, and altogether they were having a very lively time. Lawn parties and picnic parties, riding and boating, and one gaiety after another, followed each other in rapid succession. And Guy was the life and centre of every gathering. No circle was complete without him, nothing a success unless he managed it.

To Helen he was always polite and courteous, nothing more. Not a word of the past was ever mentioned between them, and neither by look nor act did he show that she had ever been more to him than any of the other ladies with whom he laughed and talked and flirted.

Helen had no heart for all these gaieties into which she was drawn and forced to take a part, and was looking forward impatiently to the coming of cold weather, which would hasten these people back to their homes. She was not one who could act what she did not feel, and though she did her very best to be gay and cheerful, she was not the Helen of old, and many wondered why Miss Manvers seemed always so sad and preoccupied. But this sadness lent a charm and grace to her manner which was very winning, and more than one whom Helen knew to be in every way worthy exerted himself to win her favour; but she turned coldly away from them all.

Among the visitors at The Hall was a delicate, fragile girl, dressed always in deepest mourning, to whom Helen had felt irresistibly drawn from the first moment they had met. There was something about Lilian Maynard which spoke of a great sorrow, and though bright and cheerful always, her voice and eyes seemed full of tears. She was going away very soon, and invitations were already out for a large party to be given before her departure.

A party at The Hall was sure to be a grand affair, and everybody, even Helen herself, was looking forward to it with more than usual pleasure and interest.

The evening when it came was all that could have been desired, and the old Hall, which had in its day opened wide its hospitable doors to many a joyous company, never welcomed a happier throng than gathered there that night, representing as it did the beauty and wealth of far and near. And none was more beautiful than Helen Manvers.

"I will be happy to-night," she had said to herself when dressing, noting almost impatiently the weary, drooping eyes, the sad, tired expression, that were growing so habitual to her. And so, with something of her old-time vivacity and spirit, she entered into the festivities of the evening.

Supper was over, the evening far spent, when,

making her escape from a gay party who would have detained her, Helen found her way into a little room off the library, where the squire in the early part of the evening had been showing some curiosities rich and rare which had been collecting in the family for years.

Helen had a passion for such odd relics, and was glad to find herself alone and able to enjoy them free from intrusion. She had scarcely seated herself, however, when she heard footsteps, and the sound of a low voice humming the strains of a waltz.

The intruder entered the room, and, coming up to Helen, stood for a moment at her side. Half vexed she looked up, and Guy Bernard, for he it was, threw himself wearily into a chair opposite. He watched her for a few moments in silence, and then said:

"I suppose nothing would induce you to give me one dance before the evening was over—not even if it were a square dance—and—"

But Helen raising her brown eyes reproachfully he changed his tone and said:

"Forgive me, Helen; but you will promenade with me, will you not?"

"Thank you; but I am enjoying myself very much where I am," she answered, quietly; and there are many here who do dance, if I do not."

Guy arose and walked the room thoughtfully back and forth for a few moments.

"The air of these rooms is stifling," he exclaimed, at length. "Come, Helen, let us go outside."

She arose, but reluctantly, and observing it, Guy asked:

"Do you care so much for those specimens?"

"Yes, indeed," she answered, eagerly. "I don't think I should ever tire of looking at them."

"Many have quite a history, some a very sad one," Guy said, drawing her hand through his arm. "I remember well, when a boy, listening spellbound to an uncle who was exceedingly fond of relating the circumstances under which some of the articles were procured."

"To know they have a history would add much to their interest," Helen said. "But anything that has come from Eastern climes has a great charm for me. I suppose I am very foolish."

Just then a servant came and touched Guy on the shoulder, whispering something in his ear.

"How provoking!" he exclaimed. "I shall be obliged to excuse myself for a few moments, Helen." He led her into a small, dimly lighted room. "If you will await me here I will be back almost immediately."

The night was just perfect. Helen drew aside the heavy curtains to get a breath of the dewy, fragrant air outside, but dropped them again almost instantly as the odour of a cigar, and the voices of two gentlemen talking, came to her.

"So," one of them was saying, and Helen recognised the voices as belonging to one of Guy's friends, "Miss Maynard is the favoured one, is she? Well, Bernard shows good taste; but I wouldn't have thrown over Miss Manvers for a dozen like Lilian Maynard. I tell you, Ross, I think her simply elegant."

"Who? Miss Manvers? Yes, she is. I wonder how she takes Guy's inconstancy?"

"I don't know," the other replied. "She seems to me always—well, if not exactly sad, away off. Shooting is too good for Bernard if it is true that he has shown her attention and then deserted her for another. But one hears so many stories!" And here the speakers passed out of hearing.

But Helen had heard enough. The mystery of those last letters, Guy's past indifference, everything was now explained to her, and with these revelations came another, and her very heart stopped beating, while life seemed slowly, slowly slipping away as the truth dawned upon her that she had loved and lost. Away off, it seemed to her, another voice was saying:

"I could scarcely get away from those people, Helen."

So far Guy went, then stopped short at sight of the white face and pleading eyes raised to his.

"Why, Helen?" he exclaimed, in utter astonishment. "What is the matter?"

Her lips refused to move; a deathly faintness swept over her; for one brief, happy moment she believed herself to be dying, and then Guy's eager, frightened voice, urging her to speak to him, brought her back to consciousness again. She arose to her feet; a faint colour came into her cheeks.

"I think I was a little faint," she said. "I was very warm; the air from that window has completely chilled me," she continued, in answer to his inquiring looks, as a tremor passed over her, shaking her from head to foot.

"Helen, you are ill. Let me do something for you," Guy said, in a concerned voice.

"No, no! It is nothing—only a faintness from which I shall soon recover. Have you seen Harry lately? I wonder if he knows how late it is?"

"I have not seen him," Guy answered; "but if you will sit down here I will send him to you."

"No, I will come too," she said. "Ah—there he is now!" in a glad, eager voice as just then Harry and Miss Maynard appeared in the doorway. "We were coming to look for you, Harry."

"And we have been searching for the past hour for you," Harry said. "Where have you managed to keep yourself so long?"

How she got through the ceremony of getting away—of saying goodnight and good bye to them all, especially to Miss Maynard, who clung to her and kissed her as though it were indeed a final farewell she was taking—Helen never knew. But she did; it was all over at last, and she went home, as the reader already knows, to spend the night in bitter and unavailing tears.

It was not strange that after a night of dissipation Helen should want rest and sleep; so, as a matter of course, when morning came she was not disturbed. As she did not appear at the late dinner, however, Mrs. Manvers, supposing her still asleep, went to her room to call her. But Helen was not asleep; and if the white face and tear-stained eyes told their own story, Mrs. Manvers said nothing; but very tender were the hands that smoothed and caressed the aching, throbbing head until at last the girl fell into a long, dreamless sleep.

Helen did not know that Guy was to accompany Miss Maynard home, but she felt immeasurably relieved when Harry told her he had done so.

"I could not meet him yet," she said to herself, as she lay in the darkened parlour one afternoon, two or three days after the party, a terrible throbbing in her temples, a dull, heavy pain in her heart, telling herself it was wrong to give way to sorrow as she was doing, when it was all for the best. "It is all for the best—it must be!" she thought; "and some day I must see it, though it's all so dark to me now."

And lying there her thoughts went out to the time when Guy should bring Miss Maynard among them as his bride. Over and over again she pictured them together, both so good, so noble, so cultured, so well fitted for each other. What a life of love and happiness would be theirs! In sharp contrast rose before her her own desolate future.

"How can I ever bear it?" she cried out, in the intensity of her pain. "Oh, Guy, I would to Heaven we had never met!"

Hark! there were voices coming up the walk—mamma's, Bessie's, Harry's, and another which set Helen's pulses fluttering, her heart to beating wildly. It was Guy. He had come, and she must prepare herself to meet him. There was no escape; even now Bessie's bird-like "Helen! Helen!" was floating through the rooms. If she had had more time, a moment of dread and expectancy, she could not have done it; as it was, she turned from looping back the draperies at the window and greeted Guy as calmly as she would have done the week before.

"We are all going to the river, Helen—Guy and Harry and I—and we want you to go too; will you?" Bessie exclaimed, excitedly.

"Yes," Guy said, "I was coming over to see

if you had recovered from the effects of the party, and to propose a sail. The day is so fine that it seems a pity not to make the most of it."

Would she like to go? Her heart said no most emphatically; she wished her lips dared say it too. Yet what excuse had she to offer? Her headache? Harry would laugh at her. Meanwhile, Bessie was waiting her decision in almost breathless anxiety, Guy with polite deference. There was no other way—she must go; and assenting, she went to her room to get ready.

A few moments later she joined Guy and Bessie on the piazza. Harry was decidedly behind time. "Was he never coming?" Bessie asked, and with the restless impatience which belongs to childhood she began to decorate Guy with leaves and flowers. Suddenly, as if the thought had just come to her, she exclaimed:

"Why, Guy, Harry said you had gone home with Miss Maynard."

"Well," Guy answered, "we'll have to take Harry to task for telling stories about me, won't we?"

"Lulu Randall tells stories about you, too," the little one continued.

"And what does Lulu Randall tell about me, pray?"

"She said you were going to marry Miss Maynard. I told her it was a story—you weren't going to marry Miss Maynard. Then she said she guessed her Sister Maud knew, and that she said so. But you are not going to marry her—you are not going to marry anyone, are you, Guy?" coaxingly, and standing off to admire the effect of her decorative genius.

"I don't know about that," Guy replied, looking at Helen with an amused smile.

But Helen stood with her face towards the river, her thoughts apparently a thousand miles away.

Harry at that moment joining them, they proceeded to the river. It was a delightful sail. Even Helen, sore as was her heart, enjoyed it. Not a breath of air was stirring, the water lay smooth and bright, with scarcely a ripple upon its surface. The boat glided slowly along the stream, while through the dreamy autumn air rose the voice of Harry in merry song or in some more solemn measure, the deep tones of Guy joining in with harmonious effect. Two hours later they rowed up to the boat house.

"Let us go to the top of the hill and watch the sunset," Guy said. "It will be grand from there to-night."

"It is quite impossible for me to go," Harry answered, decidedly. "I have an engagement to-night and am already late. But if these young ladies will promise to be agreeable and entertaining, possibly I might be induced to let them go."

"We cannot. You know, Harry, mamma said Bessie was not to be out after sundown," Helen said, quickly.

"Will you not go with me, Helen?" Guy asked, turned eagerly toward her.

She was about to answer when Harry interrupted her.

"As my sister's natural adviser and guardian on this occasion, I give my full and free consent," said he; "my only advice being that you do not stay out too late. Come, Bessie," and taking the child by the hand the gay and thoughtless Harry turned toward the house.

"Are you tired, or is it that you are unwilling to trust yourself to my care, Helen?" Guy asked, in a low voice, reading her reluctance to go with him in her expressive face.

"No; certainly not," she answered; and quickly seated herself to avoid the questioning eyes bent upon her.

The sail was a very quiet one. Guy seemed grave and preoccupied. Helen was silent, feeling the smallness of the party a restraint after the merry prattle of Bessie and the gay nonsense of Harry.

They reached the hill. Guy fastened the boat, and taking Helen's hand, assisted her to the land, still retaining it in his until they had climbed the height and stood together at the summit. The lovely, peaceful valley on one side, the river, like silver, flowing on the other, stream and valley bathed in the glory of the

setting sun, made a picture which once seen could not readily be forgotten.

Helen stood with clasped hands, and her thoughts and heart were lifted to her Maker with feelings of deepest reverence and adoration.

The flush of the sunset died slowly out of the western sky, and shadow and gloom fell quickly where but a moment before all had been bright and beautiful.

"How like my own sad life!" thought Helen. "Only to-morrow's sun will awaken this scene to new beauty and gladness, while from my heart the shadow will nevermore be lifted."

With a long-drawn sigh she turned at last to her companion. Guy stood with folded arms, looking down intently, almost sternly, upon her. Her eyes fell quickly beneath that gaze, and whatever remark she had been about to make would remain for ever unsaid.

"Helen," Guy said, at length, "I wish to ask you a question; may I?"

She made no answer; her eyes were again studying the landscape at their feet.

"Helen," and Guy came nearer, laying a light hand upon her shoulder, "if I were to ask you the question I asked a year ago, would the answer be still the same?"

She started nervously, while the blood stained forehead, face and neck to deepest crimson. A thousand thoughts flashed through her confused brain, as many conflicting emotions filled her heart. Above all, however, was a deep feeling of scorn against herself that she could not turn to him with the same answer upon her lips, but instead stood trembling and silent beside him, conscious that his keen eyes were reading her very soul.

"Answer me, Helen," Guy repeated; "do you not love me?"

Poor Helen! She had thought she could not weep again, but his persistence, his tenderness, were too much. Tears filled her eyes, and in a moment they were flowing beyond all her power of control.

Guy put his arm about her and gently drew her head against his shoulder, a very happy, self-satisfied smile upon his face meanwhile. He smoothed back the bright, rippling hair from her forehead; but the tears had ceased to fall, the last sob died away, before he spoke again; and then:

"Can you tell me now, Helen?"

Still no answer; and with a low, fond laugh Guy drew her hands away and, bending his lips to hers, whispered:

"Why will you not speak to me?"

Then indeed Helen withdrew herself from his arms, and looking steadily at him said, proudly:

"I will answer you, and truly. A week ago, yes, an hour ago, perhaps—I could have said I loved you; but now—understand me—"

But Guy waited not to hear all the indignant words she would have said. He pressed her closely to his heart.

"At last! At last, thank Heaven!" he cried. "Oh, Helen, how I have longed and prayed and waited to hear you say those sweet words!" And reverently, passionately, he kissed again and again the tear-stained eyes, the sweet red lips.

What did it all mean? Helen could not tell. She half believed herself to be dreaming. Yet surely Guy's arms were about her, Guy's voice it was talking to her, Guy's kisses upon her lips. Of one thing she was certain: he loved her, and at last, forgetting all else, she leaned confidently against him, happy in that thought.

And here, dear reader, we will leave them; upon the privacy of the confessions and explanations that followed we will not intrude. Suffice it to say that they were entirely satisfactory.

The twilight deepened and darkened around them, and finally, remembering Harry's advice, they turned toward home. As they glided slowly down the stream the full moon rose, bright and glorious.

"We have left the darkness and the shadows behind us, dearest Helen," Guy whispered, breaking the sweet silence. "A new light has dawned upon our pathway—a happy omen of the new life opening before us."

GEMS OF THOUGHT.

DESPAIR and postponement are cowardice and defeat. Men were born to succeed, not to fail.

CONSCIENCE is the voice of the soul; the passions are the voice of the body.

CHARITY gives itself riches, but covetousness hoards itself poor.

YOUTH looks at the possible, age at the probable.

A SHIP on the broad, boisterous, and open ocean needeth no pilot. But it dare not venture alone on the placid bosom of a little river, lest it be wrecked by some hidden rock. Thus it is with life. 'Tis not in our open, exposed deeds that we so much need the still voice of the silent monitor as in the small, secret, every-day acts of our life.

FAITH has a vision of its own, but no light in which it can distinguish objects except the light of prayer.

IMPOLITENESS is derived from two sources—indifference to the divine and contempt for the human.

Be indifferent to nothing which has any relation to the welfare of men. Be not afraid of diminishing your own happiness by seeking that of others. Devise liberal things, and let not avarice shut up your hand from giving to him that needeth, and to promote the cause of piety and humanity.

STATISTICS.

It is stated that during the last 12 months 7,023 boxes of eggs were exported from the Orkney Islands. These boxes contained from 126 to 150 dozen each, and taking the average at 140 dozen, there would be a total of 11,798,640 eggs. At 8d. per dozen (which is rather under than over the real price obtained in Orkney) the total value would be £32,774, which is more than half the free rental of the county, and equal to 20s. per head of the entire population.

AGRARIAN OUTRAGES (IRELAND).—An official return, just issued, gives the number of agrarian outrages committed in Ireland which were reported to the Inspector-General of the Royal Irish Constabulary during the month of July, 1881. The total is 259, including 4 cases of firing at the person, 3 aggravated assaults, 2 assaults endangering life, 4 assaults on bailiffs and process-servers, 2 cutting and maiming of the person, 20 incendiary fires and arson, 2 burglary and robbery, 2 forcibly holding possession, 17 killing, cutting, or maiming cattle, 130 cases of intimidation by threatening letters, 25 cases of intimidation by other means, 5 attacking houses, 25 injury to property, and 10 firing into dwellings.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

HOMINY GRIDDLE CAKES.—To one pint of warm boiled hominy add a pint of milk or water, and flour enough to make a thin batter; beat up two or three eggs, and stir them into the batter with a little salt. Fry as any other griddle cakes.

BREADED EGGS.—Boil hard and cut in round, thick slices; pepper and salt and dip each in beaten raw egg, then in fine bread-crumbs and fry in butter, heating hot. Drain off every drop of grease and serve hot.

CLARET CUP.—Put into a bowl three bottles of soda-water and one bottle of claret. Pare a lemon very thin and grate a nutmeg; add to these in a jug one pound of loaf-sugar, and pour over them one pint of boiling water; when cold strain and mix with the wine and soda-water; a little lemon juice may be added.

COFFEE ICE PUDDING.—Pound two ounces of freshly-roasted coffee in a mortar, just enough

to crush the berries without reducing them to powder. Put them into a pint of milk, with six ounces of loaf-sugar, let it boil, then leave it to get cold, strain it on the yolks of six eggs in a double saucepan and stir on the fire till the custard thickens. When quite cold work into it a gill and a half of cream, whipped to a froth. Freeze the mixture in the ice-pot, then fill a plain ice mould with it and lay it in ice till the time of serving.

AT THE OARS.

THE oars are in, and the boat swings round;

They drift at the stream's sweet will. Save the wave's soft lapping of keel and plank,

And the zephyr's sigh on the reedy bank, The summer eve is still.

With book on knee at the stern she leans, He faces her, lounging too.

"Oh, what," he murmurs, "were sweeter bliss

Than to drift for ever through life like this With nothing at all to do?"

A curl of contempt on the short red lip; Her eyes, with a flash, look up.

"Ay, well enough for a soul," she sighs, "Content with the sluggish draught that lies

In Sloth's ignoble cup!"

He saddens. Long has he hoped to win That spirited heart and proud;

Yet a something lacks which he fails to clutch

To prompt the esteem he craves so much. On his brow is a doubtful cloud.

An inspiration! He grasps the oars—

Splash! they have caught the wave.

The tide is headed; then leaps the prow, As he bends to his work with determined brow,

And a stroke that is strong and brave.

She claps her hands. When at last is reached

The boat-house float, 'tis true His face is flushed, and his forehead drips,

But there's that in her smiling eyes and lips

That is sweet to his heart, and new.

Then he hands her out, and a pressure feels

Not known to his palm before.

"Ah, 'tis well," she laughs, "with the tide to float

For a trifling space, but I do so dote On vigour and vim at the oar!"

And happy he looks as she takes his arm

With a soft and confiding air,

As though he had learned in that fleeting hour

A thing worth knowing, and fraught with power,

In winning a maiden fair.

MISCELLANEOUS.

The physicians who have come in their thousands to attend the Medical Congress have, many of them, brought their night bell with them, or, to be less metaphorical or poetical, have been receiving patients at so many guineas a head. The fame of some of the foreigners is so great, and so unrivalled on special items of the art, that it is not unnatural they should be hunted up by speciality patients.

The latest joke about King Kalakua, of the Sandwich Islands, is that he cannot help being a good Christian. The reason assigned is that

his ancestors ate so many missionaries in their time that it worked into their system and was transmitted to their descendants, Kalakua among the number. Missionaries who are eaten are, after all, not wasted, it would appear.

At the Central Criminal Court the young Irishman named Hickie, who had been convicted of sending a threatening letter to Mr. W. E. Forster, has been sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment.

An extensive coal-mining company in the State of Illinois, being unable to secure sufficient workmen, has sent an agent to Europe with instructions to bring back to the United States 500 miners, with their families.

A PUBLIC company, with a capital of £4,000,000, is about to be formed, with the aid of large financiers in the City, for the purpose of acquiring and reclaiming waste lands in Ireland, and for other purposes connected with agricultural industries in that country.

The value of unoccupied land at the Blackfriars end of the Thames Embankment is stated on the authority of Sir Henry Hunt, consulting surveyor of Her Majesty's Office of Works, to have risen since 1870 from £40,000 to £94,825 an acre.

In some countries, especially in the East, obesity is considered a beauty, and Tunisian young ladies are fattened before marriage. Roman matrons, on the contrary, used to starve their daughters before the ceremony, to give them leanness.

It is believed that the Duke of Edinburgh has made representations to the Admiralty on behalf of the officers who accompanied him in the Reserve Squadron, asking that a special allowance might be made to them in consequence of the extraordinary expenses they incurred, in returning civilians.

A COLOURED man, a slave up to the end of the Rebellion, is, with two or three exceptions, the largest cotton planter in Mississippi. The assessors' returns show that the coloured people are increasing their ownership of property with most satisfactory progress in all the Southern States.

INTELLIGENCE received from Lloyd's states that the fine iron ship Rodell Bay, of Glasgow, 1,117 tons register, is supposed to have foundered at sea with all hands, 35 in number. She left San Francisco on the 3rd December with a full cargo of wheat, and has not been seen or heard of since.

An attempt is being made to stock portions of the Thames with trout, and the young fry seem to take kindly to their new quarters.

A NEW swimming device consists of a light frame, carrying a float and longitudinal shaft, the latter having at one end a small screw propeller. The swimmer reclines on the float, and, grasping a handcrank in each hand and placing his feet on two footcranks, proceeds rapidly and easily, with his head far enough above water to be comfortable.

We have had the white ox, the white elephant, the white fox, the white crow, the white mouse, and the white blackbird in the list of abnormal specimens of the animal kingdom. To this has now to be added a pair of snow-white swallows, which have built a nest, apart from their peers, over the door of a house in Hohenlimburg (Westphalia), and are busy raising a brood.

At Windsor, on Saturday, August 6th, the 37th birthday of the Duke of Edinburgh was celebrated with the usual honours paid to members of the Royal Family. The bells of St. George's Chapel and St. John's Church rang merrily at intervals, and salutes of 21 guns were fired in the afternoon from the artillery in the Long Walk and Virginia Water.

A LARGE public meeting was held in Rome the other day to protest against the laws which guarantee his palaces to the Pope. It was presided over by a man who had spent 16 years in the Papal prisons. When the meeting approached the resolution, agents of the Government interfered and prevented its being read. The chairman said the people knew its purport, and putting it to the meeting it was carried by the unanimous voice of 5,000 persons.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

OUR CORRESPONDENTS are requested to observe that, although we never publish their names and addresses, we desire to be furnished with them in all cases, in addition to selected names de plume, otherwise communications may not receive attention. No charge is made for advertisements appearing on this page, and no responsibility is undertaken concerning them.

E. B.—A few drops of sulphuric acid will remove most stains from the hand without injuring them. Care must however be taken not to drop it upon the clothes. The juice of ripe tomatoes will remove the stains of walnuts, as well as other stains, without harm to the skin.

W. R.—According to common accounts, tea was first brought into England from Holland in 1666, and a pound then sold for 60s.

W. B.—Statistics go to show that suicides are more frequent in hot weather than during a lower temperature.

M. O.—To prepare ox-gall for washing coloured articles, empty the gall in a bottle, put in it a handful of salt, and keep it closely corked. A teaspoonful to five gallons of water will prevent coloured articles from fading.

W. E.—Bathe your eyes night and morning in a solution of borax and water—a teaspoonful of powdered borax and a pint of water.

E. S.—Turpentine, linseed oil, and amber mixed to a proper consistency will make a good stain for an old floor.

W. D.—Flowers may be preserved by dipping them into melted paraffine, withdrawing them quickly.

A. H.—We do not know of any work on the subject, but we give you in brief three methods for preserving eggs. One is the usual method of preserving them in lime water. Another is to pack them in very dry barrel salt, with the large ends downward, using sufficient salt to keep the eggs from touching each other. Keep them in a cool place. The French method is to dissolve four ounces of beeswax in eight ounces of warm olive oil, and with this mixture anoint the eggs with the tip of the finger. The oil will be immediately absorbed by the shell and the pores filled up with the wax, making the shell airtight. If kept in a cool place, eggs may be preserved in this way for two years.

G. G.—The Ashantee of Africa, like the ancient Greeks, spills, when he drinks, a little of the liquor on the ground as an offering to the gods.

A. B.—Rome was captured four times in 16 years, and during that time 15,000,000 human beings perished by sword, pestilence and famine.

C. W.—The emerald is significant of success in love, of faith, victory, and immortality, and is lucky to those born in June. The opal brings good fortune to those born in October. To all others it is a symbol of misfortune, though hope is also connected with it. The sardonyx is the symbol of marriage, bliss and unanimity, and is the special stone of those born in August.

F. E.—The oldest note in the possession of the Bank of England is dated 1698.

G. T.—The phrase "as mad as a March hare" is an old saying derived from the fact that March is a month when hares are excitable and violent.

A. T. N.—Bees were cultivated in the very early days of man's existence. A bee-hive is found upon an ancient tomb in Thebes.

F. D.—A brilliant whitewash, closely resembling paint, is made as follows: Take half a bushel of unslaked lime, slake it with boiling water, and cover it during the process to keep in the steam. Strain the liquid through a fine sieve, or strainer, and add to it a peck of salt, previously dissolved in warm water, three pounds of ground rice, boiled to a thin paste, and stirred in boiling hot, half a pound of powdered Spanish whiting, and one pound of clean glue (previously dissolved by soaking it well), and then hang it over a slow fire in a small kettle within a large one filled with water. Add five gallons of hot water to the mixture, stir it well, and let it stand a few days covered from the dirt. A pint of this mixture will cover a square yard upon the outside of a house if properly applied.

O. C. U. would like to correspond with a lady between thirty-three and forty, medium height. Respondent must not be a widow.

STARLIGHT JOE, eighteen, tall, dark, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady about seventeen or eighteen.

J. H. C., seventeen, tall, fair, good-looking, would like to correspond with a good-looking young lady about sixteen or seventeen.

MARY T., tall, fair, good-looking, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a young gentleman with a view to matrimony.

MIRIAM, LEAH and EDITH, three friends, would like to correspond with three young gentlemen. Miriam is eighteen, medium height, fair, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home and music. Leah is seventeen, tall, dark, good-looking, fond of dancing. Edith is eighteen, medium height, fair, fond of home.

I'M BLYTHE THAT MY HEART'S MY AIM.

I.
THE mother went down to the byre, where Jenny was milking the kye.
"Jenny," said she, "your lad is false, and you ken it as well as I;
There's folks has seen him wi' Lizzie, not once, but again and again."
"Ah, weel!" said Jenny, "I'm sorry for that, but I'm blythe that my heart's my aim!"

II.
"If a lad has na sense to ken when he's got a good chance for a wife,
I'm not the lass to worry for him, and fret folks out of their life;
There's milking and baking and washing to do whether lads go or bide;
And there's kith and kin and the house to mind if I never should be a bride."

III.
"They say that Lizzie has money—and money's a lift through life—
I hope she'll be thrifty and loving, for Johnny deserves a good wife;
And wastrel's a thing that brings—as it ought to do—shame and want.
So a woman should aye be careful, without being scrupit and scant."

IV.
"And I hear that Lizzie is bonnie, and gay as a bird in June;
Ah, weel! I count myself bonnie enough when I'm dressed for the afternoon—
In my little calico jossy, and my collar as white as snow,
And at my throat a bit of pink ribbon tied in a pretty bow."

V.
"But if Johnny thinks he'll do better, he need na come here again;
I'm sorry when folks pass by their luck, but I'm blythe that my heart's my aim!"
Then someone laughed—and there stood Johnny—his bright face all in a glow.
"Jenny," he said, "it is not your ain!—you gave it to me, you know!"

VI.
"You gave it to me last Hallowe'en, and you promised to marry me too."
Then Jenny turned with a rosy blush, and what could the lassie do,
When her lover with smiles and kisses made the foolish gossip plain?
What could she do but kiss him back, and say to him over again:
"Oh, Love, my heart is always yours, and I'm blythe that it's not my ain!"

GERTRUDE and SOPHIA, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen between twenty-four and thirty. Gertrude is eighteen, tall, brown hair, grey eyes, fond of music and dancing. Sophia is twenty-four, medium height, brown hair, grey eyes, fond of home and children.

HAPPY MAY and LIVELY BLANCHE, two friends, would like to correspond with two good-looking young gentlemen. Happy May is medium height, dark hair and eyes, fond of music and dancing. Lively Blanche is medium height, dark hair and eyes.

ROS and BOB, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Bob is twenty-three, fair, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music. Bob is nineteen, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music. Respondents must be seventeen to twenty.

A. H., eighteen, medium height, brown hair, hazel eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music, would like to correspond with a tall, fair young gentleman.

LILY and ETHEL, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Lily is twenty-one, medium height, dark, fond of music and dancing. Ethel is nineteen, tall, fair, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music.

BASEFUL HARRY would like to correspond with a young lady about sixteen or seventeen, good-looking, fond of music.

ALLY SLOPER, a Royal Marine, twenty-two, medium height, dark hair and eyes, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady of eighteen, tall, fond of home and children.

FAIRY BILL, a Royal Marine, medium height, fair, light hair, blue eyes, good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of home and music, would like to correspond with a young lady between eighteen and twenty-two, medium height, fair, good-looking, fond of home and music.

FORGET-ME-NOT and MINNIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Forget-me-not is twenty, tall, dark, fond of home and children. Minnie is eighteen, medium height, dark, fond of home and children.

NELLY and DOLLY, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Nelly is twenty-one, fair, blue eyes, fond of singing and dancing. Dolly is twenty-one, fair, blue eyes, fond of music and dancing. Respondents must be between twenty-two and twenty-three, dark, good-looking.

REX, nineteen, medium height, fair, would like to correspond with a young lady about the same age.

LOVELY EMMA, thirty-four, tall, fair, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a young gentleman.

LILY, twenty-one, medium height, fond of home and music, would like to correspond with a tall, fair, good-looking young gentleman between twenty-two and thirty.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

LOVING MAN is responded to by—Clarissa, twenty-four.

EIGHTEENTH LIGHT DRAGOONS by—Mabel, nineteen.

BASEFUL WILL by—Elsie, seventeen.

ETHEL by—F. L. C., nineteen, tall, fair, fond of home and dancing.

BASEFUL WILL by—Hilda B., eighteen, fair, light hair, blue eyes, good-looking, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children.

LOVING MAN by—Lizzie, twenty-eight, medium height, brown hair, grey eyes, fond of home and children.

EIGHTEENTH LIGHT DRAGOONS by—Ella, eighteen, medium height, brown hair, grey eyes, fond of home and music.

DARLING LOU by—W. J., twenty-three, tall, dark, of a loving disposition.

SAUCY SUS by—E. G., twenty-one, tall, dark, fond of home and children.

MAY by—Honest Phil, twenty, medium height, fair, of a loving disposition, fond of music.

SWEET BRIER by—Charley, twenty, tall, fair.

R. R. W. by—Isidore, nineteen, medium height, fair, brown hair, blue eyes.

CHARLEY by—Clara, eighteen, medium height, good-looking.

WILLY by—Mary, seventeen, fair, good-looking.

JIM by—Stella, tall, dark, of a loving disposition.

BEN by—Maud, medium height, fair, dark hair.

A. C. by—Marie S., seventeen, dark, good-looking.

BEN by—Rosebud, twenty-four, tall, fair.

FIFTH ROYAL LANCERS by—Matilda, nineteen, fair, fond of home and music.

JIM by—Violet, eighteen, medium height, fair.

ALIC by—Saucy Sus, tall, fair, auburn hair, blue eyes.

WALTER by—Dark-eyed Gyp, tall, dark, good-looking.

A. G. by—Bonnie Kate, tall, fair, good-looking.

FIFTH ROYAL LANCERS by—May, nineteen, medium height, fair, fond of dancing.

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